This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

CASTLE DALY:

THE STORY OF AN IRISH HOME THIRTY YEARS AGO.

CASTLE DALY:

THE

STORY OF AN IRISH HOME

THIRTY YEARS AGO.

BY

ANNIE KEARY,

AUTHOR OF "OLDBURY," ETC.

"Whereas to the composition of novels and romances nothing is necessary but paper, pens, and ink, with the manual capacity of using them."—FIELDING.

VOLUME I.

London:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1875.

251. l. 790.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

CASTLE DALY:

The Story of an Irish Home Thirty Years Ago.

CHAPTER I.

"Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
With night we banish sorrow."—HEYWOOD.

A BRIGHT sunny spring morning after a night of rain. Heavy clouds, like a dispersed but not beaten army, hung in threatening masses on the brows of a range of dark, slate-coloured mountains that shut in the landscape to the west, while the sun climbing the summit of a lower range of grass-clothed hills on the east made the waters of Lake Corrib dance in its light, and turned the rain-drenched trees that surrounded Castle Daly into a forest of diamonds. The house, a solid grey stone, many-windowed mansion, with a turreted roof, and four dilapidated towers ornamenting its sides, stood on a slope between two grassy

hills and fronted the head of the lake just where its waters, after narrowing into a river-like channel through a pass in the hills, spread out again into a second shimmering sheet of silver where emerald slopes and purple heads saw themselves reflected.

The front door stood wide open that morning, as it generally did in all but the very worst weather, and from the top of its high stone steps a wide view was commanded. Frowning mountain heads and delicate purple distances, soft green levels shading into the blue of river and lake, the near ground being variegated with every gradation of tint, from black bog land to bright ferny hollows and cultivated fields. Just in front a lawn sloped from the top of the little eminence on which the house stood to a white road skirting the northern shores of the lake, whose windings the eye could follow till they were lost among the hills. Bold outlines and fair colouring were to be seen at their very best under the radiance of the spring sunshine; but it was not altogether to enjoy them that the different members of the Castle Daly household, as they left their rooms one by one, passed the door of the breakfast parlour where the meal waited for them, and sauntered, hatless and bonnetless, down the hall steps into the rain-drenched garden.

It was more or less a matter of course with them all to

spend rather more of their time out of doors than in, and if there was anything to be done at a fixed time, even such a pleasant thing as breakfast, an instinct against punctuality gave zest to a little preliminary dawdling.

First, a boy of about sixteen came out with a book in his hand, at which he gave a careless glance or two before thrusting it into his pocket and rushing across grass-plot and flower-border to join a group of servants who simultaneously left their work, in doors and out, at the sound of a bugle, and flocked to the yard gate to meet the bearer of the post-bag, who just then made his appearance blowing his bugle and driving at an astonishing rate up the road in a jaunting car.

Next a girl, about a year younger, with a dark silk handkerchief tied across her golden-haired head, tripped down the steps and stood for a minute or two quite still at the bottom, with hands clasped behind her back, and her face turned up with an intent, eager, pleased look towards the sloping hills at whose base the sunny waters of the lake glittered. Last, hatless, with his hands in the pockets of his loose morning coat, appeared the master himself, Squire Daly, "his honour," as the people around universally called him. He stooped his head instinctively in passing the doorway, as if not quite sure that even its high arch left him room enough to pass under, and then stretching *his unusual length* of limb against the door-

post, crossed his arms on his breast and looked forth lazily. A large, well-made, good-natured giant style of man was "his honour," with a sunburnt handsome face on which it was difficult to say whether an expression of acuteness or of lazy enjoyment predominated. His eyes glanced slowly, first with an amused twinkle i them towards his young son, the centre of a group of gesticulating servants, then over the landscape, half closing now and then, and peering intently as if to make out some object in the distance, brightening at last with a peculiar loving light as they rested on his daughter, who kept her motionless position at the foot of the steps, too closely wrapt in her own thoughts to be aware of his neighbourhood. He watched her for a second or two and then called out,

"Hollo! you Ell-woman, what uncanny spells are you weaving this morning for our undoing? are you summoning your kindred from the lake to help in your incantations? Come, leave the Good People, and pay a little attention to your father, you undutiful Princess of the Golden Locks."

The dreamy look vanished, the young girl sprang up the steps, and it was a brilliantly happy face, all sparkling with dimples and smiles, which received her father's morning kiss. "I had no idea you were down," she exclaimed; "I came out to gather your flower; I can't think how I came to forget it."

I can. Your relations in the lake called you, and all the concerns of the upper world went clean out of your head, as your mother complains they usually do, you unpractical, yellow-haired O'Flaherty witch!"

By this time she had drawn him down the steps towards a flower border, and as she fastened a powdery purple auricula in his button-hole she said, "I don't believe she was a witch—that old Castle Hen heroine, only a true patriot, whom all Irish fairies were bound to work for. You may laugh at me as you will, but I shall always be glad that you called me after my yellow-haired O'Flaherty grandmother, and say that I am like her and Cousin Anne."

"Let me see, what was the penalty the old witch ancestress earned for herself and her descendants to the hundredth generation by her uncanny meddling with forbidden things—that all the gold they were ever to have was to be carried on their heads, never any in their pockets, was not that it? You stand a very good chance of exemplifying the prophecy in your person, madam." He lifted his daughter's hair, which had fallen down over her shoulders as she stooped for the flower, and crumpled it up in his hands. "Here is a quantity of glittering useless stuff; what a pity it can't be melted down and stamped with the Queen's head; though stay, does not the legend, or at

CASTLE DALY:

THE STORY OF AN IRISH HOME THIRTY YEARS AGO.

What business has he, I should like to know, to be running errands for a screw of an old grocer in Ballyowen when I want him about the place?"

"Truth's in every word ye spake, Mister Connor, dear. I'd not own him for a son, let alone a grandson, who'd be mane-spirited enough to choose service wid a bit of a shopkeeper whin he might be doin' his duty by the family. It's breakin' his heart over the slavery of it, Murdock is, this minute; but 'twas no thought of my own. Shure ye all know well enough 'twas the mistress herself laid her orders on me. I'm tellin' the bare truth widout a word of concalemint. 'Mrs. Malachy,' says she, standin' on that straight bit o' gravel walk where his honour stan's now, and lookin' at me out o' her brown eyes in the terrible searchin' way she has—shure, yer honour, ye know it—'Mrs. Malachy,' she says, 'ye do very wrong to let that slip of a boy belanging to ye idle his time fishin' wid Mr. Connor. It's larning an honest trade he should be at his age.' And thin, a week after, what did she do but drive up her own self to my cabin-door, and ordered me out to spake wid her, and tould me straight out how she'd settled it all wid the grocer at Ballyowen for Murdock to go to him and run errants; and it was thin—for I'll tell ye the clear truth now, since truth's always fittest to be spoken—'twas thin, and wid the mistress her own self, that

the few words passed about the tay and shugar, and the trifle of whisky by times to keep up me lonely heart, that brought me here this day."

"Come, Goodie, that won't do. You'd better have stuck out for Miss Eileen's or Mr. Connor's generosity; this new fiction won't hold water at all."

"Well, anyhow, 'twas to pleasure the mistress I let the boy go from me; and oh, the loneliness of the place widout his voice and his smile!—I that have had him wid me since his father and mother died in one week of the faver! What will I do at all widout him, yer honour?"

"Nothing but unlimited tay, shugar, and whisky will make up for the loss—that's what you mean, I suppose? Now listen to me, Goodie. Mrs. Daly has put your grandson into the way of earning an honest livelihood for his own good; and you had better get rid, as quickly as you can, of every sort of notion that we are to bribe you into being thankful."

"For his own good! Yer honour says it's for the boy's raal good; and shure a jintleman like you ought to know. Well, then, I'll walk back as I came the three miles and a half to me lonely bit of a place in the bog wid that word of comfort to me heart, plased and contint to have had it from yer honour's own lips."

"You did not suppose that Mrs. Daly had any other motive than the boy's good, you silly old woman?"

"And indeed she's altogether a sinsible lady, wid ways of her own beyant such as me to comprehend at all; but it's the word from yer honour I go by. Now I've got it, I'll go home contint."

"But I may give her the 'tay and shugar,' mayn't I, papa?" said Ellen. "I don't exactly remember promising —but——"

"Take care, take care; the tay and shugar have provoked efforts of imagination enough already. Give her what you please. If my recollection of Murdock serves me right, much of anything won't be requisite to compensate for the loss of his society."

"I don't agree to that," said Connor. "I wish my mother had fixed on anyone else to turn into a grocer. He was the sharpest gossoon about the place, and I can't get on without him. Look here, Mrs. Malachy, when you see Murdock, tell him there's something he can do for me at Ballyowen. I've heard that there are two or three swans' nests among the reeds in the creek of the river just above the town. I wish he could manage to get me an egg or two, and bring them up here the first time he gets a chance; and we'll have some fun together yet, in spite of all the shopkeepers in Ballyowen."

"That was not a particularly wise message, Connor," said Mr. Daly to his son, as they strolled up to the house together. "Your mother settled this boy at Ballyowen to keep him out of your way, I strongly suspect. You'll only bring him to grief if you tempt him from his work."

"It's a horrid bore. If ever I take to any one of the boys in particular, my mother never rests till he's sent away. It all comes from Pelham's having sneered about my ragged regiment, when he was at home last. He never knows what it is to want companions; he has friends enough all the year round at Eton."

"Ah, you ought to have friends. You ought to have been at school years ago. Your mother is right there. We'll banish no more bare-legged gossoons for your sins, but send you out of the way yourself, sir!"

"I'd be glad enough to be doing something, only it need not be to an English school you send me. I would not like to come back such a prig as Pelham."

"Easy now. There's your mother beckoning to us to come in to breakfast. I wonder how long we have kept her waiting."

Mrs. Daly was already seated at the breakfast-table when her husband and children entered the room, and, as they approached her, she turned up a fair, thin, delicately-tinted cheek to receive the greeting kiss that each bestowed.

"I should not have called you in," she said quietly, addressing her husband, "but it is Tuesday — the day when I always expect a letter from Pelham—and the bag has been here half an hour. Won't you unlock it at once?"

"I think I'll fortify myself with a cup of coffee first. There's no saying that there mayn't be missives in that bag for me that even Pelham's effusions won't sweeten."

He carried the letter-bag off to his end of the table with rather a provoking smile; and an absolute quietness settled on Mrs. Daly's face—not vexation, or disappointment—only a sort of stillness that seemed to put out, as with an extinguisher, the glow of soft colour that had risen to her cheek as she spoke, and to turn her brown eyes into cold shining stones.

He sat watching her as she occupied herself silently with the business of the breakfast-table, her thin, jewelled fingers moving here and there among the cups with quick, precise motions; and as he watched, the same tender expression with which he had regarded Ellen stole into his face.

It was that dainty reserved grace, those still patient looks on the fair face, that had won his heart years ago, when he first left his rollicking Irish home, and became aware of some of its defects by the contrast afforded by

the habits of the well-ordered English family among whom he met her.

She, with her considerate wise ways and gentle temper, was surely the remedy he wanted for the evils he saw and did not know how to combat; and if he felt a chill fall on him after he had won her calm acknowledgment of preference, he comforted himself with visions of a magical awakening into full responsive love and bright enjoyment of life that would be effected by her transportation into the warm, bright, loving atmosphere he meant to take her to. He had not quite done with dreams and visions about her yet, though to other people it was evident enough that several years of weak health and weary contention against disorders she could neither tolerate nor effectually control, had not tended to make a naturally plaintive temper less sad, or to reconcile an over-anxious heart to surroundings of gaiety that were a perpetual jar on its forebodings.

"Come, Eleanor, will you say something pleasant to me if I give you your letter at once?"

She would not let the corners of her mouth relax into the least glimmer of a smile as she answered—

"I really want it very much; that is all."

"Well, here it is, then, and may it reward you. Here's something too for you, Miss Eileen—a scrawl from Cousin Anne; that illegant home-made envelope, with the stamp

upside down, can have come from no other place than 'Good People's Hollow and the queen of O'Flaherty witches' herself; and now"—crumpling up the remaining contents of the bag in his hand and making a grimace at it—"shall I put myself on the rack for three-quarters of an hour for no manner of use, or shall I toss these rascals at once into the fire without giving them leave to cudgel my brains?" He made a motion as if to throw the papers on the fire, casting at the same time a comical look towards his wife, as if he expected her to interfere to prevent it. She was too much absorbed in her letter to heed him. It was Ellen who stole behind his chair and laid two detaining hands on his arms.

"Papa, I wish you would let me help you with your business letters. I could write for you sometimes when you don't like the trouble, and then people would not get angry by being kept waiting."

"Fine business it would be that you and I concocted together."

"I daresay it would be fine. Cousin Anne used to help her father in his business. We should be like them."

"No doubt we should; if we ever do set up in business together, it will be in Good People's Hollow fashion! Fine O'Flaherty schemes for weaving silk out of thistle-

down, and making straw hats from wood shavings, you would drag me into! But don't raise your hopes; your mother will never let you get astride a broomstick and chase Will-o'-the-Wisps with your dear godmother. Does she send you any news of herself in that crazy-looking billet you have in your hand?"

"It is only to tell me that she has quite finished her model of the three-wheeled car that cannot possibly be overturned on the bad roads between the Hollow and Ballyowen, and that old Brian Lynch has undertaken to build one. It is to be ready before the next great Ballyowen Fair day, and she will be able to drive into the town and keep her own boys in order. 'There has been nothing but faction-fights and rows at Ballyowen on fair days, lately,' she says, just because she has not been able to look after her own people."

"Would not you like to be there to look after them, too, perched at Cousin Anne's side on this new Venus's car and drawing a tribe of ragged followers after you safe out of the way of faction-fights and whisky? We will have Pelham and your uncle Charles over from England to see the triumphal procession if that three-wheeled car ever gets built. Eh, mamma?"

The father and daughter had been so engrossed in their banter of each other, that they had not till now observed

a change of expression that had come over Mrs. Daly's face as she finished her letter.

The sheet had fallen from her hands to the ground, and she was leaning back in her chair with her fingers tightly locked together as if she were struggling for composure.

Mr. Daly sprang from his seat, and was in a minute kneeling by her side.

"My love, what has happened?—what have you heard? Something wrong with Pelham?—an accident to Pelham? Speak, you frighten me out of my senses!" And indeed his ruddy face became almost as pale as his wife's, as he watched the effort she made to command her voice to answer.

"I have done wrong to frighten you; you will think nothing of the news—it came suddenly on me at the end of the letter. Pelham has been ill; there has been a fever in the school, and he has taken it. My brother Charles went to Eton to see him—it is he who writes the news; he thinks that in a day or two he will be well enough to travel, and had better leave the infected air, but he does not want to take him to Pelham Court for fear of carrying infection to his own children; and he is doubtful what we should like to do about having him here. Dermot, I must be with Pelham."

"Of course you must, and so must I. Don't forget that

he is my eldest son as well as yours. Of course he comes to us when he is ill—the Pelhams have not made him so altogether one of themselves but that this is his home when he wants one."

"But the other children—Ellen and Connor?"

"They must take their chance, or they can go to Happy-go-Lucky Lodge, unless you think a fortnight of unmitigated O'Flaherty worse than the chance of fever."

"And, dear mamma, there would be no danger for us," cried Ellen. "Why there is always fever, more or less down in the village; and Connor and I go in and out of the cabins every day, you know."

"Pelham would have been as fever-proof if you had let him live at home. Castle Daly has some advantages, you see. Well, Eleanor, it will be something to cheer you up, and put the rest of us on our good behaviour, to have Pelham at home for the rest of the summer. I'll scribble off a line to Charles without loss of time, and gallop off with the letter to catch the post-car when it stops at the next village on the road to Cong. You'll be easier in your mind when you know that the letter is on its way, and your boy certain to come to you."

CHAPTER II.

"Spinning under the Great-World Tree,
Yggdrasil, hover the Sisters three,
Glibly, heedlessly. Ha! but what pull'd
Just a thought astray there, the fingers of Skuld
A knot in the thread double gold, or a grey
In the sun-lighted doom? Either way
The Fate lingers an instant, whilst over our heads
She lifts to the sun that caprice in her threads
To see clearly, to shape it, perhaps, but the shade
Falls across our dim prescience, a Spirit hand laid
On our pulses that beat, now in hope, now in dread
Presentiments, shadows from Skuld's lifted thread."

Little Sealskin, and other Poems.

WHEN Mr. Daly returned from his rapid ride, he found his wife taking her daily number of constitutional turns up and down the sunniest walk of the flower-garden, which, by dint of much persevering effort, was kept up to a pitch of trimness and perfection that enabled her, while pacing it, occasionally to fancy herself transported back again to her old English home. This was rest to her spirit; if her eye had fallen on any token of neglect or disorder, such as she could not have failed to see at every

step in any other part of the pleasure-grounds, the benefit of the walk would have been over for her, the fresh air and the sunshine would have lost all their sweetness, and she would have returned to the house as unrefreshed as she came out.

She was standing with her back to the mountains, looking with satisfaction at a neatly-dug flower-border, when her husband came up behind her.

"Ah, that was a good morning's work of Ellen's and mine. We shall turn out accomplished gardeners at your need."

"Yours and Ellen's! Why did you trouble yourselves? Where was Saunderson?"

"In the sulks. By the way, I did not intend to bring you face to face with the misfortune so soon; but the truth must come out sooner or later. Saunderson has taken himself off. He chose to turn away one of the under gardeners, and there was a general row in the place. I fancy his wife took fright at some threats against him, and carried him off by a *coup de main;* or else he heard of something very much to his advantage, for he took his departure suddenly."

"How long ago?"

"Five days. Come, confess that you have not missed your factotum yet?"

"I have only been out twice, and, Dermot, I had rather have known. I wish—I really wish that you would always tell me directly when anything disagreeable happens, then I should not live in constant dread of what I may hear."

"I did not know you lived in constant dread."

"I dreaded Saunderson's going for one thing—he was the only servant I could rely on for keeping order. He has had a hard life here among the other servants. I am not surprised he should go directly something better offered."

"No more am I; it was naturally nothing to him that he had been eighteen years in our service, and been more indulged and trusted than anyone else about the place. As an Englishman, he was bound to better himself. Why should he stick to the sinking ship like these poor benighted Paddies and Murdocks who leave their ragged coats on the rose bushes, and plant heads of celery among the geraniums? It would not have been becoming in him."

"Dermot, I wish you would not say such things."

"What things—against Englishmen?"

"No, about sinking ships. If you mean anything by it, I wonder you can say it so lightly; and if, after all, such speeches are only idle words, is it not cruel to be always dropping weights of apprehension on my heart?"

"I certainly don't mean to be cruel. You have not lived with me eighteen years without finding out that my speeches are not always to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. You must allow something for metaphor and the exigencies of conversation, of which in your company I have to sustain the chief expense. And even if there is a spice of truth in the words, why should you trouble yourself so terribly? The ship struggles on anyhow, not sunk yet; and there's always good prospect of the wind changing and plenty of excitement in the struggle. I don't think I could put up with a life of plain sailing such as your brother Charles has before him. Something of a scramble comes more natural to me."

"And of all things that is what is most hateful to me."

"I am very sorry for it; but don't you think, as it is just that sort of existence I have unfortunately brought you to, you might soften the expression of your aversion a little? Your lips can drop weights as well as mine, though you don't seem to believe it."

They were now pacing the gravel walk, arm in arm; and as he finished the last sentence, he laid his hand tenderly over the slender fingers that rested on his arm, and looked fondly in her face.

Her eyes were fixed on the ground; but she felt the look, for a little tinge of colour came into her fair grave

face, and the dark eyelashes that swept her cheek trembled.

"Dermot," she said at last, "will you do something for me that I wish very much?"

"Have I ever refused to do anything that you wished since the day that you owned me?"

"Not little personal things—in those I have had more indulgence than I cared for—but, oh, Dermot! I must say it: I have not had my wishes about the things near my heart—the management of the house, and the education of the children. You know that Ellen and Connor would not run wild as they do if I had my way, and that there would be other changes. I should think of the children's future welfare before everything."

"And curtail all your husband's present enjoyments!"

"And my own too."

"But, my dear, you have not any enjoyments except making yourself miserable. For my little Ellen's sake there is hardly any pleasure I would not give up; but, if anything effectual is to be done in the way of economising, I shall not be the chief sufferer. It will not be a question of giving up pursuits and amusements merely, but of throwing over a number of people who have learned to depend on me, and will not do so well with anyone else."

"Because you have spoiled them."

"Granted; so much the more reason for not letting them suffer for my sins."

"Dermot, these are the old arguments we have gone through so often, when we have talked of these things together; they confirm me in a wish I am going to beg you to grant. But tell me first, did you post the letter?"

"Do you suppose I lost it on the road?"

"I supposed that, in thinking over Charles's letter, it might have occurred to you that there was no need for haste, and that it would be better to wait and write fully by to-morrow's post. Charles says that Pelham will not be fit to travel for some days; and he purposes to come to Ireland with him, and pay us a visit."

"Whew! that's a consequence of Pelham's fever I had not reckoned on."

"We owe him a great deal for his kindness to our son."

"Of course I shall give him a hearty welcome."

"I want you to do more. While I was walking up and down here, it seemed to come to me that this visit of my brother's—the first I have had from any of my family since I left England—would be the beginning of a new era to me. He will come with leisure to listen to our troubles, and consult with us on the state of our affairs; and, Dermot, if you would but open your heart to him—

you know what he is in his own home and on his own estate."

"Perfectly well, and that he would not have the smallest hesitation in undertaking, at your request, to remodel this house and this estate on the same pattern. He would come back five years afterwards, confidently expecting to find it transformed into a district of Norfolk; and the Squireens (including your humble servant) and the Paddies behaving themselves like Norfolk farmers and labourers. He would, perhaps, give a little longer period for throwing the mountains into the lakes, and reducing all to sky and turnips."

"I always thought my brother was considered a particularly reasonable man."

"A much more reasonable man than your husband, I grant you, if you compare the actions of the two together."

"Oh, Dermot, the rest it would be to me if you would consent to consult Charles, and follow his advice! You are too——"

"Weak; never mind looking about for a word."

"Indeed, I was going to say good-natured, to bear to inflict what might seem, at first, hardships on people who prey upon you. You allow yourself that changes are necessary?"

"I allow that; I inherited misrule, and have let evils accumulate through sheer incapacity to see how to remedy them. If I thought Charles could really help me, I would listen to him gladly enough. There is some one nearer at hand, however, who seems to be solving some of my difficulties, in a native fashion, more congenial to the soil than anything Charles is likely to suggest. You won't easily forgive me for saying this, but if I were really to set about mending my ways, Cousin Anne would, I believe, be a safer person to take into my counsels than your brother. She is combating Irish evils with Irish virtues, and he knows nothing about either."

"You cannot mean it, Dermot. I should feel set aside indeed if Anne's advice were paramount in this house."

"You need not be afraid. She understands your feeling about her too well ever to be of any use to me now. She will never intrude where she is not wanted."

"And, Dermot, you cannot seriously believe that a woman like Anne, who really seems to me sometimes to be almost crazy, could give better advice than my brother?"

"She knows the people we have to deal with to the core of their hearts, and he would never know them."

"But she is a woman, and he is a man."

"Ah, but you see, you are also a woman, and I am a man—though, perhaps our being English woman and Irish

man makes a difference in your estimate of the relative wisdom of our opinions."

"I have never, that I know of, set my opinion above yours."

"Well, no, I don't think you have; you only set your brother's and all your relations' opinions above mine. I think of the two, the other would have been easier to bear. Never mind, my dear, you can't help it; most people would say you were quite right in your judgment of us, and I am not sure that I don't agree with you myself."

"You will consult Charles, then? If you knew how the undefined fear of coming trouble weighs me down; how the struggle after economies I can't carry out is wearing my life away—you would feel for me."

"I shall give you a pretty strong proof of how much I have been feeling for you all these years, if I take your brother for counsellor; and it will come to that, I suppose."

"Thank you, thank you; you won't go back from that word, Dermot? I shall be more at rest now than I have been since we married."

"That's something gained at all events."

"And during his visit, Charles will see a great deal of Connor and Ellen."

"And approve of them—of my little Ellen at least—if he means to keep me in good-humour."

"He will find her very different from his own daughters, I am afraid."

"Let him crow over her, on their behalf, as much as he pleases. I will not have my little one bullied. She has a warm heart, and a bright wit of her own, and I would not like to see them cowed and dulled by over-strict training. Don't shake your head at me, Eleanor. I have let you have your way about Pelham's education, and I am not saying it has not answered. He's had all the advantages you coveted for him, and been formed on your own models. I'm as proud of him as you are, but as for understanding him, or he me, he might as well be anyone else's son as mine. He has not been brought up in my ways, and he'll have no more illusions about me than you have. It is creditable to his understanding, no doubt, but fathers don't like to be too severely criticised by those who are to come after them. We shall get on together well enough, I dare-say, when he comes home for good; but I shall know exactly how plainly he sees his father's incapacities, and how pat and ready he has all his plans for altering every-thing when his time comes. In due course it will come. I shall break my neck out hunting, or be shot from behind a hedge, by some poor wretch who adores me now because I let him alone; and who will have been educated into an enemy under some new system of management. Pelham

will do his duty better than I have done, I fully believe; and, from my heart, I hope his reign will come soon enough for you to have many years' enjoyment of it; but I think I should like there to be somebody to look back with foolish delusions to the old times. If I ever get back to wander about the place, I should like to hear some of the children say, 'It was after all the home of our hearts when he was in it.'"

"Indeed, Dermot, I cannot have you suppose that Pelham does not love you as dearly as do the others. He has, perhaps, a colder manner, but you should—indeed you should—teach yourself to believe that there are people who feel a great deal more than they can ever show—a great deal more!"

"Well, we will leave it there, then. What a delicious day it is! Won't you desert your pacing place for once, and take the walk by the lake you used to be so fond of—for the sake of old times?"

"That are going to change to better new times, I hope. It will be a new thing to me to spend a morning in taking a walk. I ought to go in and hear Ellen read, but I am in spirits to-day. I feel as if many new good things were to come from Pelham's return and this visit of Charles."

Ellen saw her father and mother set out on their walk from the schoolroom window, and was not sorry to perceive

that the usual routine of her morning's occupations was not likely to be carried out. She threw away her book with an exclamation of glee, crossed her arms on the window-sill, and determined to begin the enjoyment of her holiday by giving herself up to what she called "a good think." She was ashamed to acknowledge it, even to herself, but she was very glad to escape the two hours' reading with her mother. She loved her mother and she loved reading, but somehow the two things did not go well together. She had thought it an honour when, two years ago, Mrs. Daly, wearied with changes between English governesses who disliked the country, and Irish governesses whose ways did not inspire her with confidence, had resolved to take her daughter's education into her own hands; but the arrangement had not worked well, and the lesson hours had come to be dreaded equally by teacher and pupil.

Ellen always came to the end of them with a painful sense of her own incapacity and folly, and of the utter uselessness of attempting to attain her mother's standard of perfection in anything. Yet to win that mother's approval had been from her earliest childhood the very strongest wish of her heart. She adored her father, but her mother was her conscience—the high, incorruptible judge whose praise, hard to be won, she would have gone through fire and water to

gain. She built castles in the air about winning this approval, as other maidens build castles about winning friends and lovers. In her thoughts she had been everything and done everything for her mother that a girl could do or be. She had saved her life over and over again; she had stood by her side when fortune and friends had failed her; she had nursed her through terrible sicknesses; and from these dreams again and again she had been awakened to meet well-merited reproof for little acts of disobedience and forgetfulness that could not be atoned for to Mrs. Daly by any amount of passionate feeling. "It is not caresses and protestations of love I want from you, Ellen," Mrs. Daly would say, with that sad look in her eyes that was a stab to poor Ellen's heart; "it is only a little thought." And all the time it seemed to Ellen as if her shortcomings were the direct result of excess of thought. If she had cared less passionately for her mother, and had fewer schemes for pleasing her, she believed she should have made fewer mistakes and remembered the little things better. Yet surely there must be some way of transmuting love into service, if only one could discover it? It could not be the cold hearts that did their work best. Now, to-day, it seemed as if a chance of coming at the solution of the problems she had so often meditated was coming to her. This brother, whom her mother loved entirely, who was

just what she wished him to be, he would be the interpreter whose perfections would make plain what it was that was deficient in herself; he should be the model on which she would earnestly endeavour to mould her thoughts and actions.

She strained her memory to recall sayings and doings of his in former visits that could be made to yield ground for her hopes. She had been almost a child when he was last at home, but—yes—certainly he had always been kind to her. He had lifted her carefully on and off her pony many times, and he had been very angry with Connor for frightening her with a gun one day when they were all out in a boat together. Ah, but how sorry she had been for having brought that anger on Connor! She remembered how Pelham's eyes flashed when he wrested the gun from Connor's obstinate hands, and how he had sat quiet and grave all the rest of the time they were in the boat, with his arm round her, as if he were still afraid of her being hurt—turning a deaf ear to the jokes Connor perpetrated, with a view of carrying off his defeat and his little fit of rebellion with a high hand. She must never do such a thing as that again; never let herself be made a cause of dissension between the brothers. Now she recalled that look on Pelham's face, she could fancy herself learning to watch him when talk and laughter were going on, to see if he

were pleased or vexed, as anxiously as she watched her mother.

She must learn to be wise enough to say herself, and cause others to say, the right things, and ward off the little jars and sneers that made everyone unhappy. Yet if there were so many people to watch, would it ever be possible to breathe freely again? Ellen drew a deep breath, and lifted up her head from her hands as she reached this point in her meditation and met her mother's eyes, who on coming from her walk had paused at the school-room door.

"My dear Ellen, have you really spent the whole morning in looking out of the window? Will the time ever come when I can trust you to find useful occupation for yourself when I am busy? It will be a great rest to me if it ever does."

CHAPTER III.

" . . . . . much good might be sucked from these beggars. "They were the oldest and honourablest form of pauperism. Their appeals were to our common nature ; less revolting to an ingenuous mind than to be a suppliant to the particular humours or caprice of any fellow-creature or set of fellow-creatures, parochial or sectarian."—ELIA.

IT was found that a week must elapse before the expected visitors could arrive at Castle Daly; and Mr. Daly, in order to undo any suspicion that might linger in his wife's mind as to his hospitable feeling towards her brother busied himself with preparations for his reception and entertainment on a lavish scale, which struck Mrs. Daly as decidedly inconsistent with the project she hoped was to be the main feature of the visit.

He made several journeys up and down the country to procure horses such as he considered creditable to the establishment, for his guest and eldest son to ride and drive. He had the yacht, which was in constant use by the family for excursions on the lake, refitted, and the crew

supplied with new clothes with the Daly badge. He overlooked his cellars, and added to his stock of choice wines. He sent out invitations far and near, for dinner parties and excursions. He suggested to Connor that it would be well to employ his ragged regiment of gossoons, hangers-on of hangers-on, in preparing bonfires at all the available points, to be fired on the evening of the arrival just as the travellers entered the grounds. He dropped hints of the expected arrival among his people, which he knew would bear fruit in the shape of assembled crowds and enthusiastic tumult of welcome.

"At all events," he said to his wife, "we'll give them a thoroughgoing Irish welcome, with all the honours, if it's the last time a Daly ever does it in this place."

"I must say I think it quite unnecessary," Mrs. Daly answered. "I do not think that it will even please Charles, and surely it will be very inconsistent with what you have to tell him of the state of your affairs?"

"Oh, but it *will* please him. I've always observed that your well-to-do, prudent people, who poison every pleasure for themselves by calculating its cost, are glad enough to take their fling of enjoyment with friends who have the heart to put the dirty thought of the money out of their heads. They throw the reproach of extravagance in their teeth when all's over, but they take to the fun

kindly at the time. You'll see Charles will. I'm not going to borrow money of him to pay for his entertainment—he knows that. I may have to go down the ladder a long way, but not to that depth. We—at least the Irish faction of us, Ellen and Connor and I—would die in a ditch first."

"Dermot, forgive me for saying it, but you know such words as those are mere talk. Charles is a great deal too much attached to me to see any of us reduced to need without coming forward to help us. And if you were gone and the children left unprovided for, it is on him they must depend."

"Ah, there you have me! That's the sting. You are really a very clever woman, my dear, whether you pretend to it or not. That's the point of the lance by which you are driving me to sit down in the hornets' nest I have made for myself, and submit to the stings. Right you are, not to spare to use it. However, don't be uneasy about this last flare-up of the dying light in the socket; it won't count for much. Let your brother see us in our glory, and enjoy himself just for once."

"You don't love him so dearly, Dermot, that you should commit imprudences for his sake."

"No hoodwinking you, I see, Eleanor. I did think perhaps that you would have taken it kindly that I

should treat your brother just as I would treat one of my own if I had one; but it's true enough, it is not altogether his taste I'm consulting. I want to put a little heart and life into Pelham's home-coming this time. I'd like him to feel for once that, let him have been brought up where he may, he is eldest son here, and that so the people think of him. The recollection of what he is to them might stay with him for ever afterwards. I shall never forget the morning I came of age, and the welcome I got. It will be warm about my heart when I die, let me come by my death where and how I will."

"But Pelham will not be of age for three years; would it not have been wiser to put off any demonstrations you think it right to make for him till then?"

"Wiser, perhaps, but then the demonstrations might never have been made. We shall all have been re-modelled and grown too sober to enjoy ourselves before another three years are out. It won't do Pelham any harm for once to feel the stir of the *ould* life, and the ould warm feelings. If Charles thinks the enthusiasm is all meant for himself, take my word for it he'll laugh at us in his sleeve, but he'll like it."

Mr. Daly was not mistaken in his estimate of his brother-in-law's humour.

The hospitable, lavish, easy-going, pleasure-seeking ways

of the Irish household were as utterly foreign to Sir Charles Pelham's practice and habits as Mrs. Daly was aware they must be, but they did not strike upon him so unpleasantly as they had done on her when she came to take up her abode for life among them. He had come out for a holiday with a comfortable sense of having done a noble thing in the care he had bestowed on his nephew during his illness, and it did not seem amiss to him that some rather signal tokens of appreciation of his devotion should be shown. It was of course all very Irish, the bonfires, the shouts, the wild ragged crowd that beset the carriage a mile before it reached its destination, and insisted on dragging him and his nephew, at the peril of their lives, down the steep descent to Castle Daly. It was a laughable, perhaps a pitiable, display, but it was a thing to have seen once. It would give him something to talk of on his return home, and with the other experiences of his visit, lend a certain authority to his utterances when he held forth on Irish questions to his English friends. He was not at all disposed to take it amiss that his brother-in-law should have bestowed some pains on making his welcome so truly national. The person who *was* disposed to take it amiss was the tall, dark-eyed, gentleman-like-looking lad of eighteen, who sat far back in the carriage with his hat well slouched over his eyes during the triumphal pro-

gress, and who seemed, for the two hours and a-half during which it lasted, to be intently occupied in efforts to keep his handsome head so exactly straight between his shoulders, that neither the men with grinning faces, who poked their heads in at the window of the carriage on the right, nor the women with up-turned eyes and hands raised in blessing to the left, should have reason to suppose that he had inclined a quarter of an inch their way.

Sir Charles, who had been considerably startled, not to say frightened, at the first on-rush of the crowd, and who till he was fairly in sight of Castle Daly, was never quite comfortably sure that this was not a Ribbon riot he had got among, was scrupulous in taking off his hat at regular intervals, and muttering a word or two in answer to the jokes and exclamations of his wild welcomers. But Pelham only opened his lips once or twice to reply rather contemptuously to Sir Charles's anxious whispers, "You are sure it's all right, Pelham, eh?"—"You don't think there's any mischief brewing, eh?"—whenever they came in sight of a new beacon-light glaring from an overhanging precipice or when the joyous tumult round the carriage threatened to degenerate into a fight, through the determination of those who were behind to push themselves into a position to gain a nearer view of its occupants.

He was disgusted with his uncle for being uneasy. It

was another element of ridicule in the proceeding; and oh! what a fool he felt, sitting up there without the chance of escape, while a crowd of grinning men and horrible gaunt old women stared at him and passed remarks among each other upon his growth and his good looks! If he had not understood every word they said, Irish as well as English, it would have mattered less. The struggle to keep his head still and his eyes staring steadily straight before him might have been relaxed, if he could have avoided catching, every now and again, a familiar word, a phrase, a sweet tone among the hubbub, that in spite of himself quickened his heart-beats suddenly, and exposed him to the horrible danger of finding that his dignity and reserve were sliding away from him, and that he, sixth-form Eton fellow as he was, might be reduced to the point of sharing the laughing, weeping, shouting, hand-shaking excitement of the idiots round him. He could hardly bear to believe in such a possibility; but a something that came in his throat, and the disgusting tendency his eyes had to wink and smart as if there were tears in them, put him upon his mettle and gave him resolution to preserve the wooden attitude of his countenance through all the appeals that met his ears.

"Shure it's himself thin. Blessings on the day I see him agin, though it's nothing but a lock of his jet-black hair, that bates the world for beauty, that brightens me eyes yet.

Misther Pelham, dear, I'm trying hard to get at ye, but the boys won't let me at all. I'm ould Molly Tully, the first nurse ye iver had, avourneen, who had ye in my arms before yer own mother, and did what was right by ye—wid the Holy Water—and tuck ye up stairs afore ye iver was down, that I might see ye rise in grandeur a step for ivery year of yer life, and niver forgetting ould friends in the height of the good luck that'll come to ye."

"Misther Pelham, yer honour, this way—give a turn of yer eyes this way—and ye'll see one that's thought of ye night and day since ye was gone, me wid the red hair—Dennis Malachy—Hill Dennis, the boys call me. Shure yer honour'll never have forgotten me, that picked ye out of the bog when ye was a little slip of a gossoon, and had lost yer way, and was crying fit to break yer heart. Don't ye mind how I carried ye home on my shoulder dripping wet, wid yer hands clutching hold of me hair, that has not lost the feel of yer fingers through it yet? Bad luck to ye, Murdock O'Toole, for pushing me back just as his honour was going to catch sight of me. I'll niver believe it's not glad to see me he'd be, once he knew I was in it; but how should he smile on us, boys, whin some of ye behave so badly, and won't let those come near that has the best right? It's ashamed of us, his honour is, bad luck to us for not knowing how to plase him better."

"And he the eldest son of the Daly, sitting up there wid grand shoulders such as his father's son should have, and a face that bates all Ireland for beauty.'

"Ah, here we are at last, thank God," cried Sir Charles, fervently. "There's the house not a hundred yards away It's all very well to have seen such a thing as this for once, but I confess I shall not be sorry to find myself safe indoors, nor will you—eh, Pelham?—to judge by your face."

"There never was any chance of our not getting safe,' answered Pelham. "The noise has been enough to split one's head; that was all there was to complain of. I saw the house half an hour ago, at the turn of the road."

He had been thinking that it had looked more like a real home when he had caught sight of it on the same spot three years before, at the beginning of his last visit, in the course of which he had painfully discovered how much of a stranger among them all his long absence and his different training had made him. If only he had never gone away or never need come back, he sighed to himself!

There was his father standing out on the door-step, bare-headed, his tall figure and ruddy face seen distinctly by the glare of the torches and beacons, actually making a speech to the crowd that had now surged round the door, exchanging jokes and hand-shakes with the wildest-looking among them. Should he be expected to say or do

anything while this horrible struggle between shyness and excitement was oppressing all his faculties like a nightmare? It was too bad. He resolved that he would not speak a word or give a look to anyone till he was safe inside the house. He got off better than he expected. His father came to meet him as he alighted from the carriage, put his hands on his shoulders, and looked in his face for half a minute. That was perhaps the worst ordeal of all. Pelham let his eyes drop to the ground, for he did not know what he should be obliged to say or do if he let them fairly meet the wistful gaze that seemed to be trying to read his heart and begging him to give in to the feeling of the moment. After all, what business was it of the staring, gaping people round, how he met his father after a few years' absence? What could he do but look down?

"Well, my boy, go in to your mother—she is waiting for you," Mr. Daly said. And then at last the door closed behind the new-comers, while Mr. Daly and Connor stayed without to entertain and thank and dismiss their escort.

It was all over; but Pelham could not help asking himself all the evening why he could not have had a pleasant, unostentatious, matter-of-fact reception, such as he had shared with his cousins year after year at Pelham Court. A little fuss, a little excitement among the womenkind; that was only tribute due to sons and brothers and

male cousins, but no such outrages on dignity and feeling as the ordeal he had undergone. He could not forgive it all at once.

He had come home with one or two articles of English schoolboy faith strongly worked into his mind. One was that people who talked about or in any way displayed their feelings were humbugs, and had not really any feeling at all; another that there was something actually insulting to a gentleman in having any personal remark, much less a compliment, addressed to him by an inferior. Unfortunately at Castle Daly these principles were liable to be outraged every day.

With the exception of his mother, no member of the household ever thought of concealing his or her feelings, or scrupled to make claims upon other people's; and inside the house as well as out his steps were liable to be dogged by a crowd of hangers-on, who thought an exaggerated style of flattery a natural form of address from them to him.

It passed his comprehension how Ellen and Connor could let themselves be talked to, and joked with, and wheedled by the idlers who hung about the house. He was disposed to be friendly with his brother and sister. He had felt lonely at Pelham Court when the brothers and sisters there introduced him to their friends as "Our cousin from Ireland,"

and he had fancied he was looked at critically. It was in some respects a pleasant change to have belongings of his own, but he was puzzled to discover any common ground for conversation between himself and creatures whose habits and tastes were formed on such a different model. It was far from him to make any display of his school learning, which, indeed, was not anything remarkable, and he was quite content to say to himself that Connor's education was no business of his; but with his Eton notions he could not always conceal his contempt for the desultory haphazard fashion in which his brother's studies were carried on, nor his dislike to what he considered the pedantic display of out-of-the-way knowledge in which he and Ellen occasionally indulged. It disgusted him immensely to hear them talking eagerly by the hour together of the exploits of kings and heroes with breakjaw names, of whom no civilized person had ever heard, or to see them walking up and down the hall, with their arms around each other's necks, vehemently spouting rhymes which Connor (who could not have put a decent Latin verse together to save his life) had been fool enough to compose. Pelham's notion of learning was, that it was a thing to be acquired by gentlemen in fit places at proper times, and being once acquired, the right course for a gentleman was diligently to conceal or forget it, and never on any pretext to make it a subject of con-

versation or display. It was a great shock to his feelings to find that he had a brother capable not merely of writing ballads on ancient Irish history for his own amusement, but of spouting them publicly to a miscellaneous audience of grooms, under-gardeners, runners, helpers and beggars, and of deriving pleasure and consequence from their assurances "that it was himself that was the great, grand poet intirely, and had the trick wid the words that would make all the hearts in Ireland bate to hear him."

Three years ago he had thought Connor something of a spoilt cub, whom it would take a great deal of public school discipline to lick into shape, but this assumption of the character of national poet was a worse feature in his case than Pelham was prepared for. He no longer cordially wished his younger brother to be sent back with him to Eton, so fully convinced was he that he would only make a fool of himself and of everyone connected with him there and everywhere.

There was, however, brotherly feeling enough in Pelham's heart to make him sorry to come to this conclusion, and to induce him to attempt once or twice to lay his disgust before his mother, the one person in the house who appeared to him capable of hearing reason.

She took his complaints much more deeply to heart than he had at all intended her to do, and dropped so

many sad little hints of yet more serious troubles and apprehensions weighing on her mind, that he was chilled and silenced. He was ready enough to find fault in a small way, and to fret himself about disagreeables that he could hope to see altered, but at the bottom of his heart he did love this incongruous disappointing Irish home very dearly, and serious fears about its well-being he had no wish to entertain. He had been used to hear his uncle burst out every now and then in an invective against his father's extravagance and general incapacity to manage his own affairs, and he had made it a point of conscience to disbelieve every word. It would be a most disagreeable result of this holiday visit if serious distrust and disapprobation of home doings were forced upon him.

Pelham had the more time to allow uncomfortable thoughts to grow in his mind because, after the first few days, he was not able to take part in the outdoor amusements and pleasure parties planned for his uncle's entertainment. He took cold, and had a slight return of fever, after a boating party on the lake, and was obliged to be content to remain in the house with his mother, while the rest of the party were enjoying themselves abroad.

After a dull day he was not always in a mood to enter into Connor's histories of his own and his father's wonderful feats with gun or fishing-rod, and was often glad

to take refuge in his uncle's dressing-room, the only place where Connor or Ellen were safe not to hunt him out, and listen to a more sober account of the day's proceedings. It was almost certain to be mixed up with comments and reflections that fell on Pelham's irritated mind like so many little blows; but a certain vague restlessness, kept alive by the sight of his mother's sad face, made him persist in putting himself in the way of hearing what pained him.

"Well," Sir Charles would begin, as he stood warming his back at the little wood fire that the damp climate made acceptable of evenings in summer, before he commenced his toilette for the very late dinner, "so I hear, four of the officers from Ballyowen barracks dine here again to-day. Very pleasant fellows, no doubt; but they drink a monstrous deal of claret. If I were your father I should be satisfied to have their company once in three months, instead of three times a week; but, I suppose, to keep open house, and never have a quiet evening, is what is called Irish hospitality. There ought to be a gold mine under the cellar to pay for it; that's all I've got to say. One thing is quite clear to me, however—it's not out of the land that money to keep up this style of living comes, or ever will come, while the estate is managed as it is at present by your father's precious old fogie of a

bailiff, O'Roone. I can't make out whether that man is most knave or fool; but, anyhow, he deserves to be hanged for the state he and your father between them have let the land get into. I know something about land, if I know nothing else."

"But my father owns a great deal of land. You can't ride over his property in a morning as you can over"—Pelham hesitated, seeing a slight look of disgust cross his uncle's face—"over a moderate property in England, you know."

"I tell you—small or great—I would not take the whole as a gift, saddled with O'Roone, and with all the stupid incapable people your father has got hanging about. We have been across the lake to-day, riding over some farms that belong to your father, in the flat country where your grandfather built a hunting-lodge. O'Roone lives there now—a big rambling place; it must have cost a fortune to keep it up in the style your father says it was kept up in when he was a boy. When I think of what that money would have been bringing in now, if it had been spent in draining and improving the land, instead of being absolutely fooled away, I am amazed at the want of common sense that seems to run in some families. But, by all accounts, your grandfather was no worse than his neighbours—his house was not the only place where fortunes

were fooled away. We rode home through a country split up into potato farms, where the people where actually burning the soil, because they've no manure to put in, and could not afford to let the ground lie fallow for a season. I'd heard of the ruinous practice before, but could hardly believe it possible till I saw the reek of the smoke along the hill-side. Well, while I was expressing pretty strongly to your father my opinion of such a system, and urging him to make a stand against it, we passed a good-sized mansion-house, actually in ruins—iron gates swinging wide on their hinges, and pleasure-grounds dank and overgrown, with a flock of mangy sheep feeding where the flower-garden had been. O'Roone rode up to my side, and volunteered to tell me the history of the last occupier of the place. I don't know whether he meant anything in particular by it, but it was just then I noticed the look on his face that made me wonder whether he really was the stupid old fogie one takes him for at first. Anyway, the story sounded like a warning, and I feel a shiver when I think of it now, though perhaps the wetting I got in the shower crossing the lake is to blame for that. One's never safe in this climate. It seems a family called Lynch once lived there. A great friend of your grandfather's the old fellow was—imitated him in all his follies, and not having so much to justify him in extravagance, he died

leaving his affairs in a worse plight. There were two sons. The eldest—no more enterprising than the most of these Connaught landlords seem to be—slunk off to live on a pittance abroad; but the younger was a clever lad, who had been brought up in England, and he determined to have a struggle to keep the estate in the family. He persuaded the creditors to let him have the management of the property, and set to work in good earnest to make the tenants pay their rents and do justice to their land, or leave it for those who would. He got on so well that in about ten years he had scraped enough money together to pay off the principal part of the debts. A day was fixed for a meeting of creditors, and he wrote to his brother to come home. But meanwhile he had made himself enemies; there was a conspiracy against him among the old tenants whom for their idleness he had been obliged to eject from their farms. Fourteen rascals swore to have his life, and on the very evening before the day when his brother was expected home to pay off the creditors and take possession of the estate, when he had lain down to sleep full of the triumph the next day would bring, the house was surrounded by a crowd of wretches with blackened faces, fire was set to the doors, and he was shot dead as he was trying to escape from a window. That was the welcome the elder brother got when he

arrived at his old home early in the morning—a house in ruins, and the dead body of his brother stretched before the threshold. I wish I could forget the leer there was in that fellow O'Roone's eyes as he finished his story—I didn't like it. It was a great deal too much like saying, 'See what comes of meddling fellows interfering with the customs of the country.' Of course it's no business of mine; it's only for your sake, Pelham, my lad, that I take upon me to advise your father, but I feel it will come hard upon you. Unless you grow up a different man from what I expect, you will never let things go on as they are now. You could not do it. And it will be a cowardly thing of your father if he leaves the onus of the changes to rest with you, when he himself has a sort of popularity that would help him to carry them through."

"My father could not do a cowardly thing," cried Pelham, blushing hotly. "If he refuses to make changes, you may be quite sure it is not fear of danger that keeps him back."

"No; no; I don't suppose it is myself, but that is how I shall put the case when I talk over his affairs with him, as I have promised your mother to do on the first opportunity. When a fit time for such a conversation will come I can't say, for every moment is so taken up with pleasure here there is no time for business. It is all

agreeable enough. I don't know that I ever was better entertained, or had better sport, and I shall always say I am very glad I came and saw it all. I understand the country now, at all events, and know why it does not prosper. No one ever need talk before me again of justice to Ireland, or the need of improved legislation. I'll never believe it can signify what sort of laws you make for a people who expect to get crops out of the soil without manuring it, and who in doubtful weather stand—six or seven of them—gaping round a hay-cart, without attempting to fill it, as I've seen since I came here. If you could give people common sense and industry by law, then there might be some good in talking."

CHAPTER IV.

"Now when a man's servant shall play the cur with him—look you, it goes hard."—LAUNCE.

As the days passed on, Mrs. Daly began to fear that her husband, with his usual disposition to put off evil times, would allow the whole of her brother's visit to expire without ever permitting himself and his guest for a single hour to be sufficiently at leisure to give opportunity for the conversation on which she had set her heart. The sunshine and the clouds seemed to conspire against her wishes by bringing the kind of weather which gives people an excuse for saying, "We must spend this one more day out of doors; for, bright as it is now, there are signs of a change coming."

It was a positive relief to her to wake one morning and look out on a distance of cloud wreaths, which seemed to have blotted lake and mountains from the world, and left

only a narrow circle of sodden road and drenched shrubbery between earth and heaven.

Two middle-aged men shut into a house by walls of drenching rain could hardly pass an entire day together without getting into discourse on business matters of some sort; certainly not when one of them had such a talent for managing his own and his neighbours' affairs as had Sir Charles Pelham.

Mrs. Daly saw by the expression on her husband's face, and by the gesture with which he threw away the end of his cigar on the doorstep before entering the house, as he and her brother returned with dripping waterproofs from their morning round of visits to dogkennels and stables, that the confidential talk had begun already; and she watched them as they shut themselves into the study with an anxious heart. She suffered a great deal more from thinking of the pain it would cost her husband to say much that he would have to say that morning than she could have managed to make him believe. Her disapproval of his extravagance had been a vexed question between them for so many years, that it had built up a wall of coldness and reserve round her that it would cost her a great deal to break through now. The prison might be of her own building, but she was a close captive in it all the same, and could not get out. He thought it was only her

English prudence that was outraged by his reckless doings, and that all her horror over them rose from fears for the future with which his own sanguine temper could little sympathize. She had another way of looking at his conduct. Her heart as well as her conscience was wounded by the failure of her efforts to alter what she disapproved. She could not help asking herself, "What can the love be worth of which he speaks so much, if it cannot induce him to make the little efforts of self-control that I should value so much more than any other token of affection?" She did not know it was the whole nature she wanted changed. She thought it was just a few actions that might easily be regulated so as to satisfy her requirements.

This was the thought that for years had been a chill wind blowing through her heart, stiffening all her feelings with an ice covering of reserve; so that now she could not go down and sit by his side holding his hand, and claiming a share of the pain and blame he had brought on himself. She could only go up to the solitude of her own room and spend the morning pacing up down, clasping and unclasping her pale hands as in imagination she went through the conversation going on below, and pictured to herself the looks of astonishment that would come on her brother's face; the little shrugs and exclamations of disgust that

would escape from him as the story went on; longing all the time that she could in some invisible way make herself into a shield to ward this vexation from her husband. He had looked up at her as he followed her brother into the library, with a little nod and a smile as nearly bitter as a smile of his could be, which seemed to say: "Yes, you have your own way at last; this is your triumph. I hope you are satisfied." And in reality, though no one would ever know it, it was an hour of bitterer pain and humiliation to her than to him.

While the elders of the family were thus occupied in their own quarters, a desultory holiday-kind of feeling pervaded the rest of the house. No special plan for amusement or occupation had been pointed out for that rainy day, and consequently everybody took the congenial course of doing nothing. The servants, out-door and in, congregated round the great kitchen fire; and, in spite of the deep-mouthed remonstrances of a favourite bulldog of Pelham's, sent to him from England, and installed a day or two ago as guardian of the back-yard, invited such of the passers-by as were likely to repay hospitality by gossip to come in and taste the warmth. The first word of each dripping figure after the pause on the threshold that was occupied by the customary "God save all here" and the "kindly welcome," was naturally a question on the sudden appearance of this

unwelcome obstacle to free coming and going, and an invective against his energy.

"Shure I knew he was a stranger and a *furriner* from the moment whin his ugly voice troubled me ears. There's not a dog big or little in all Galway that 'ud drame of barking at me," remarked one-eyed Kitty, the most audacious beggar of the neighbourhood, whom even Mr. Daly had forbidden the house, indignantly displaying, as she spoke, to the general view the corner of her draggled red cloak that had a new rent across it. "It might have been me leg that the cratur cotched hould of. Will I niver again ate me plate of praties and drink me noggin of milk in pace and quietness in me ould corner by the sunny edge of the wall, that's been by rights the beggars' corner since a Daly reigned in the place? An' now the murthering dog's kennel is put full in front of it. Boys and girls, somethin' must be done or a curse'll rest on ye all—driving the poor from yer doors in this new fashion."

"You'll have to make friends wid the dog, Kitty," answered James Morris, a young groom in special favour with Connor; "for it's none of us can get him banished. The thundering big brute belongs to Mr. Pelham, the young squire, who has lately come home from England, and colloquies more wid his English dog than wid any Christian soul here. Word or look can boy or girl get from him

—only his dog will he open his lips to; and is it likely now he'd give up for your convanience the only cratur he's capable of convarsing wid?"

"And he a Daly! the saints be betwixt us and harm."

"The dog's a stranger anyhow; and maybe the air of the counthry'll be altogether too damp to shuit his constitution. It'll be the death of him, ye'll see, boys, sooner or later; the rain and the attintion he'll get from those that have a better right than he to come and go about the place; so be aisy about him, boys," concluded, with a cunning wink of his eye, old Phelim, the pedlar, who, already established in the most comfortable seat in the chimney corner, was slowly undoing the straps of his pack, and preparing for the display of goods and the commencement of the barter and bargaining which was designed agreeably to wile away the idle morning.

In the old school-room at the top of the house, where the younger members of the family congregated, the tongues did not wag quite so merrily.

Pelham had been driven, by the deserted state of the down stairs sitting-rooms, to betake himself for the first time since his return to his brother's and sister's sanctum; and he fancied that Ellen and Connor, as they hastily crumpled up a sheet of paper over which their heads were bent when he came in, exchanged looks that showed he was not welcome.

"I can go down stairs again, if you are talking secrets," he said. "I only came here to write a letter; though what on earth you two can find to talk about all day I can't imagine."

"Oh, it is nothing," said Ellen; "I only hurried this paper away because you say you hate poetry. We ought not to be talking now. Connor has his work to do, and so have I. Do stay and write here. You can have this half of the table, and I will take my books to the window and sit there."

Pelham's letter was one which he considered required thought and careful wording, and its composition did not tend to put him into a good humour. A school friend whom he had employed to manage the transfer of his dog from its quarters near Eton to Ireland, had in his last letter put him in mind of an invitation to spend a vacation in Ireland, which he had long ago rashly given, and dropped a hint that, as his family were now abroad, the next two months would be the most convenient possible time for him to make such a visit. Pelham had spent more than one of his vacations from school at the pleasant country home of this friend, and he had often spoken to him of the pleasure he knew it would give his father to return the hospitality. Yes and he was right in saying that it would give his father pleasure. As Pelham sat

biting the end of his pen and staring blankly at the first line of the letter, he saw in his mind's eye exactly the sort of reception that would be given; his friend would be made thoroughly at home; he would hear all the family talk; he would see all the family ways; there would be no restraint, no reticence; he would be made quite one of themselves, and what would he think of it all—Connor's wild ways; his father's and Ellen's random chatter; the servants' familiarity; the slipshod grandeur of the establishment? And side by side with this rose the picture of the quiet, trim household from which his friend came; the dignified, silent father; the brisk, capable mother; the clock-like regularity of meals; the noiseless domestics; the awe-inspiring group of pretty sisters always smiling, well dressèd, and occupied under the governess's or mother's wing. What was the great difference between them and Ellen? He raised his eyes from his letter to study her, as she sat curled up on the floor in the window recess, with a large book she was not reading open on her lap, and her dreamy blue eyes gazing up towards the window. Was it that quantity of yellow hair always tumbling over her shoulders, or what was it made her so unlike the quiet, low-voiced, nothing-speaking, well-governessed type of young ladyhood he had taken into his mind as the standard of excellence? Ah, what is she doing

now ?—the blue eyes have wakened up—no medium with her between absolute idleness and movements that take away one's breath. She has thrown up the window wide, and any possibility of continuing his letter is snatched away from Pelham by the irritation of having to listen to a dialogue shouted between a frieze-coated man at the front gate, and Ellen with her golden-haired head out of the window.

"Good morning, Thady M'Quick. I saw you did not like to pass the gate without a word from some one. You are taking the young pigs you told me about to sell at Ballyowen fair, I see. I wish you the height of good luck in your bargaining."

"Hurrah, thin! It's Miss Eileen her own self—the jewel of the world—that's spaking to me!" responded the voice from the gate. "An' if the hoight of good luck don't come to me this day, it'll only be becase luck, they say, is a famale, and, maybe, won't forgive Miss Eileen for bating her out and out in beauty. Anyhow, the pigs, poor bastes, have seen ye for the last time, and that's luck enough for thim and me."

"Well, good morning, Thady. You must make haste, or you'll be late at the fair; and Connor and I will come round by your cabin to-morrow to hear how you fared."

There was a great sound of *hurrishing* and loud

squeaking of the pigs. The procession must be moving on. Surely she will draw in her head now, and shut the window!

But no; something fresh had caught her eye. Regardless of the rain that was drenching her hair, she stretched her head further yet, so as to gain a view round the corner of the gable, and when she drew back into the room again, it was with an exclamation of dismay. "Oh, Connor dear, I wish you would go down and see what is going on in the yard. That horrid dog of Pelham's is barking furiously at Murdock Malachy, who is trying to slip past him into the yard by the side gate. Do go down and see what he wants."

"He's bringing me the swans' eggs I told him to get for me, no doubt. He's a broth of a boy, that Murdock. Send him the least taste of a message, and the thing's done. Well, I'll go down, but it will be for the sixth time this morning. I'll tell you what it is, Pelham: you'll have to get rid of that dog Lictor of yours; he's in everybody's way."

"He's only in the way of people who come where they have no right to be. My father said that side gate was always to be kept locked."

"But it never will be kept locked. It is a great deal too convenient for people who want to slip in on the sly.

I shall go down and stop that howling by shutting Lictor up in the stable for this morning, at least."

"You will do no such thing," said Pelham, testily. "The dog's mine, and I won't have him spoilt. He's been trained for a house dog, and he shall not be punished for barking at beggars. Sit still where you are, and mind your own business, and let him do his. You said you had work to do."

"Is it your business to see that I do my work, pray?"

"I shall make it my business to see that you don't spoil my dog."

"And I shall see that the horrid brute is hindered from hurting anyone."

"Oh, boys, don't quarrel, whatever you do!" cried Ellen.

"Sit down, and don't be a fool, Connor," said Pelham, taking up his pen to continue his letter, as if the matter were ended.

"Yes, be easy, Connor dear," whispered Ellen. "I'll put my head out of the window, and, though the wind is high, perhaps I shall be able to make Murdock understand that he is to go round the other way."

A burst of wind and rain came in at the open window, and with them the sound of a low fierce, growl, and a wail of fear or pain, that made even Pelham start up and throw down his pen.

"The fools have worried the poor brute till they have made him savage," he muttered to himself. "I suppose I must go down, or some harm will come of it."

Connor and Ellen were, however, beforehand with him in reaching the scene of action. They rushed impetuously past him down the stairs and through the offices into the dripping court-yard, while he followed with the more deliberate step of a person making up his mind how to act. He had chosen the position of the dog's kennel himself, and decided on the length of the chain, against the vociferously-expressed advice of half a dozen servants, who, without his consent, had thrust themselves into the discussion; and he could not help feeling convinced that this catastrophe, if it had not been planned, would certainly be made the very most of by his discarded advisers for the sake of triumphing over him.

The hubbub that was going on in the yard when he arrived there confirmed the irritating suspicion. The talkative crowd in the kitchen had emptied itself bodily into the court-yard and divided into two surging, shouting, gesticulating groups. Five or six men and as many boys, with faces expressive of real or assumed horror, had surrounded the dog. Two of the most courageous had their hands clutched in his collar, and were dragging him down to the ground. One held on to his tail, and the remainder

at a safe distance flourished sticks and kitchen utensils snatched up on the spur of the moment, in his face, the bewildered animal meanwhile glaring wildly on his tormentors, and almost strangling himself in his efforts to break from their hands. A little nearer the gate all the women servants of the house, with Ellen and Connor among them, were ranged in various attitudes round a bare-footed boy, who had already been lifted from the ground, and was leaning a shock head against Ellen's shoulder. It was all very well, of course, to be compassionate, thought Pelham. The girls at Pelham Court would be as ready as Ellen herself to help anyone who had been hurt, but they would not have gone down on their knees in a puddle of wet in the stable-yard, and had tears streaming down their cheeks, while all the grooms and half the people of the village looked on. Had nobody any common sense? Was the chief business of life here to make ridiculous scenes? Pelham strode on furiously towards the men.

"Let that dog loose instantly!" he shouted. "You're driving him mad by ill-treating him in that shameful way."

"Ill-trating the dog, is it we are, sir? Shure we all thought it was the dog that had been ill-trating the boy," exclaimed James Morris, one of the men who held on to

the collar, looking up at Pelham as he spoke with an air of innocent surprise.

"Mad's the word, and mad he is," cried the second holder. "Shure it's at the risk of our lives we're houlding him for Mr. Pelham to see how out-and-out mad and savage the cratur's turned all on a suddint, as we all knew he would, alang of being chained up here and angered wid the boys coming and going."

"Hould on a minute longer, boys!" shouted the man from the tail. "Glory be to the Saints, we have him safe, Mr. Pelham dear, and he shan't touch ye till ye tell us what to do wid him. Will we knock him on the head wid a shillalagh, yer honour, or bring the loaded pistol from the masther's room, and make an end of him that way?"

Without deigning another word, Pelham pushed a path through the crowd till he reached his favourite, who, at sight of him, shook off the relaxing hold of his captors, and, springing towards his master, placed two huge paws on his shoulders, and joyfully licked his face.

"You see he is as safe and gentle as a lamb if you only knew how to manage him properly," Pelham said, looking round haughtily on the scattered servants, who had fled far and wide as soon as they saw that the dog was loose.

"And those who don't know how to manage him'll

desarve the tratement they get, and will have to put up wid it. Shure, boys, we are warned, and can't complain," observed James Morris, the young groom, who alone had kept his place by the kennel.

Still with a restraining hand on the dog's head, Pelham bent over towards the boy, who, supported by Ellen's and Connor's arms, was now sitting up and staring confusedly round him.

"I hope he is not much hurt," he said, addressing Ellen; "I shall be very sorry for it if he is—really hurt. You may give him anything he likes from me to make up for it—money, or anything."

Two wild blue eyes, gazing out from the roughest elf locks and the palest cheeks Pelham had ever seen in his life, were lifted to his face as he spoke, and took a long considering look into it—one of those looks from which a life-long love or hate may take its birth.

"Thank yer honour; but there's nothing yer honour could give me that I would like," was the deliberate sentence that came at the end of the look, from two white lips trembling with pain.

Pelham turned hastily away, shocked and hurt.

It was not his fault if the lad was injured; and he had spoken to him kindly. What could be the meaning of the indignant flash that came from Connor's and Ellen's

eyes, as they almost pushed him out of their patient's neighbourhood.

"We are going to try to carry you into the house now, Murdock, Miss Ellen and I," Connor said.

"And the swans' eggs, Mr. Connor dear! By good luck I put thim here inside the breast of me coteen, and they're safe. As soon as I heered ye wanted thim, what could I do but come to ye wid thim?"

"And this is what you get by coming, my poor Murdock!" cried Connor, the quick tears swelling in his eyes as he spoke.

A flush of colour came into the fainting boy's face at the sight, and he made an eager effort to raise himself.

"Maybe I'm not hurt, after all, Mr. Connor dear, barring me leg: that's a trifle oneasy. I'll walk to the house wid the best of them."

But the effort to drag his leg from the ground only resulted in a deeper groan of pain than he had yet suffered to escape him, and a recurrence of the faintness, during which he was lifted carefully up from the ground in Connor's and Ellen's arms and carried to the kitchen.

"Could not some of these women help to carry the boy better than Ellen?" remonstrated Pelham, who could no *help an involuntary* movement of disgust as he saw a

arm, that a mass of dirty rags did not cover, passed round Ellen's white neck.

"Begging yer honour's pardon," volunteered the beggar Kitty, who was standing near. "There is not one of us—not the strongest—that could do it anything nigh as well. It's not the strength; it's the way, as we've all seen betwixt you and the great brute that's whispering in yer ear this minute. Ladies there are, and Miss Eileen's one of them, glory be to the blessed Virgin for that same, that have ways wid the sickness, and pain, and sorrow, to keep it down under their hand as you keep the dog there. Long may they reign over us in the land!"

There were many murmured "True for ye, Kitty," as the lookers-on flocked after the sick boy and his bearers into the kitchen, leaving Pelham alone in the court-yard to secure Lictor's broken chain, and coax him to subside quietly into his kennel.

He was bitterly vexed and annoyed at what had happened, and in the midst of his real concern for the principal-sufferer his heart swelled high with indignation at the ill-will that had been shown to himself. Those people had looked at him as if he were a sort of Cain, and he could not see that he was in any way responsible for the accident, or had done or said anything blameworthy. He felt it very hard to be so capriciously and unjustly

judged; yet before he had made the link of the broken chain secure, he had taken what appeared to him a magnanimous resolve. The prejudices of these people should not prevent him from doing what he considered his duty in this matter; neither more nor less. All proper precautions against future accidents he would enforce himself, but he would not give up the only living thing about the place that seemed capable of trusting him (Lictor was vehemently caressing the hands that were restraining his liberty at the moment), and he would insist on making compensation to the injured boy. There was no sense in the lad's saying that he would not accept any present from him. It was clearly his duty to offer him a present, since he was hurt, and the beggar-boy must be forced to accept it.

The consciousness of having made up his mind how to act supported him during the trying hours of the rest of the day, while the whole household continued in a state of excitement, and persisted in keeping up an aggravating show of antagonism against him.

At luncheon the story of the accident had to be told in full to his father, Sir Charles Pelham, and Mr. O'Roone, who, unluckily for himself, had ridden over to Castle Daly with papers to sign, and had, to his extreme discomfiture, been drawn into the conference in the study.

The gentlemen were all pre-occupied, and paid less attention to the narrative than it would have received at another time, but the few comments that did pass were distasteful to Pelham.

"Of course you won't care to keep the hound here after this, Pelham?" his father said. "He is a fine animal, and all right as far as I can judge, but there seems to be a notion among the servants that he has gone or is going mad, and they will lead him a dreadful life. Better send him back to Pelham Court, before he gets injured."

"May I not keep him here if I like, father?" cried Pelham; "he is not any more mad than I am; and I should not like to be forced to send him away for those fools saying so."

"Quite right too, Pelham," put in his Uncle; "Lictor is a faithful servant, and does his work of guarding the yard only too well; that's why your idle rascals of servants want to get rid of him, Daly. I would not give in to them if I were you, or you'll never be master of your house again."

"Sir Charles Pelham might find if he lived here that to support unpopular servants, especially if they are strangers in the country, is a task that the most popular masters find beyond their power, and that costs them their lives sometimes," observed Mr. O'Roone, carelessly.

"Yet under some circumstances it may prove a task that has to be undertaken, even if it be at the risk of life," said Mr. Daly, looking across the table at his agent, with a little sparkle of displeasure in his lazy eyes. "If you've have done eating, O'Roone, we will go back to the study; I shall not rest now till I have carried this business through. As for Lictor, Pelham, do as you please; you are right not to desert a calumniated friend, only you must prepare for some trouble. If you keep him here you will have to look after him closely."

When his father left the room, his mother took up the subject.

"Pelham, dear, you know I can't bear you to be obliged to give up anything you like, but——"

"It will be very hard if I am obliged to give up my dog," interrupted Pelham; "Connor has no end of pet animals, and the servants are ready enough to wait upon them. Why should they all take against the only creature I care for?"

"Why, indeed?" echoed Mrs. Daly, sadly; "but, Pelham, I've had the same thing to bear; I know what it is to live among people who make a point of disliking every person or thing I favour. I've learned to do without wishes and favourites now."

"Of course, if you desire it, mother, to please you, I will

send Lictor away; but all I can say is that if he goes I'd a great deal rather not stay behind. I shall wish the vacation over, and never want to come back here again, that is all."

"Then keep him, pray keep him," cried Mrs. Daly, with more warmth than usual in her manner, as she stooped to kiss her eldest son's forehead; "I should be sorry indeed to think we could not make your home happy to you for one vacation."

Here was another pain for her to take back to her room and her pacings up and down, the thought that her favourite son cared more for his dog's company than he did for hers, and could talk indifferently of never seeing her again if his will were crossed in a trifle. Certainly, she said to herself, she had not the enviable art of making people happy about her, or of being much to them. An odd-looking old maid like Anne O'Flaherty could make herself of consequence to those over whom she had no claim—men who had never loved her; children she had neither borne nor nursed—but it was different with her.

Pelham found his way back to the school-room, when his mother left him, and spent the long afternoon in alternately writing a sentence in his letter and sitting with his feet on the fender, pulling a pen to pieces, and trying to make up his mind whether or not he should add a postscript to tell

his friend that he might be on the look-out for Lictor's return to his old quarters. The decision hung long in the balance, while he sat listening listlessly to the little sounds that were distinctly heard in the unusual silence into which the household had subsided. The arrival and departure of the doctor who had come to set poor Murdock's broken limb; Ellen's and Connor's cautious steps passing and repassing the corridor that led to the room where he lay; and now and again, when a door was opened in the lower story, the sound of voices in eager, if not angry, conversation in the study below. A decision was being slowly come at there too, on which this seemingly trifling decision of Pelham's was to weigh in a manner he little expected, and which had that in it that altered and coloured the lives of everyone in the house.

Just as Pelham had all but made up his mind to add the postscript, the school-room door opened, and Ellen stole in with a deprecating, entreating look on her face that at once put all Pelham's obstinate instincts on guard.

He laid down his pen and began to fold his letter "Well, what do you want?" he began at last, finding that she stood still before him, looking at him in a fashion that made him fear his ill-humour might slip away under the influence of her appealing eyes.

"Connor sent me. He wants to know what you have settled to do about Lictor."

"Settled nothing but to go and see him fed, which I shall do as soon as I have folded my letter."

"He cannot possibly stay here after what happened this morning."

"Who says so?"

"Connor and I. Connor has promised Murdock and the other boys that Lictor shall be sent away, and he must keep his word."

"He seems to fancy himself master here, but as I happen to be two years older than he, it's not very likely I should take orders from him. Let him look after his own ragged regiment. I shall keep my dog; and you may just tell Connor that I'll never forgive anyone who meddles with him—never. Now, don't open your eyes and stand staring at me in that idiotic way. Let me pass; I tell you I want to post my letter." It cost Pelham a good deal to work himself up into such anger as this. He felt he was sacrificing his dignity, but it was a relief to come to a decision of some sort, and to have declared war if war was to be.

Ellen left the room with reluctant steps, and was beckoned by Connor, who was holding a door ajar at the end of the long corridor.

"Well, what does he say? Murdock has fallen asleep at last, so you may speak out."

"He is very angry, and says he will never forgive anyone who interferes, never; and he looks as if he meant it."

"Hum—does he?" said Connor, abruptly drawing in his head and shutting the door in Ellen's face.

She could not bear to go back into the deserted schoolroom, nor down stairs with the chance of again encountering Pelham. There was nothing for it but to ensconce herself in the low seat of the passage window, and drearily watch the rain lashing the window-panes. It seemed a cruel stroke of destiny that this day, of all days, should be hopelessly wet; if only the clouds would have lightened a little, and she could have ridden off post-haste to "Good People's Hollow," and brought back Anne O'Flaherty, there might have been some chance of an amendment in circumstances and people's tempers; as it was, it was a dreary day—Ellen Daly's first experience of irremediably dreary days.

She saw nothing more of Connor till late, when he rapped at her door as she was putting the finishing touches to her toilet before going down into the drawing-room after dinner.

"Come in. I am only sewing fresh pink bows on my skirt. Mamma looked so vexed last night when Uncle

Charles noticed the ravelled state of my old ribbons; but, oh, Connor dear, what is the matter? you look dreadful. Come in and sit down. What terrible thing has happened?"

"Nothing has happened, that's it—that's what's the matter," said Connor, after a minute's silence, drawing away the trembling hands with which he had covered his face as he sank into a chair. "Ellen, I can't think how people do things. That Matthew Lynch, when he strung up his son from the window in Galway, with all the people looking on below; and Connor of the double-sword, when he struck off the spy's head as he sat at table—how did they make their hands move when the moment came? mine would not. I have often pictured myself doing such things; but when I was there—when I saw it—when it lifted its eyes to my face and whined—I could not—my hands would not. Never again shall I be able to fancy myself doing a thing. How horrid it is!"

"Oh, Connor dear, I hope you never will! Not anything dreadful like that! Pelham would never have forgiven you. How could you ever think of doing such a wicked thing?"

"He threatened me, and that was what drove me to try. I was in the yard while he was feeding Lictor, and it put me past all patience to see how he fondled the ugly brute

and let it lick his face. I thought I would put an end to that, and show him he could not lord it over us all here yet; so, when he and everyone else had gone in to dinner, I took one of the pistols from my father's case, those he keeps loaded, and went out again; there was no one in the yard but James Morris. It was nearly dark. Lictor was lying still after his feed. I went quite close up to him, and held the pistol to his head, and then I found out that about myself I told you of."

"Connor, I am so glad; it was a wicked thing you wanted to do, and Someone [Ellen bowed her head] hindered you. I am glad."

"I believe I am glad too. Glad that I did not do it—not that I could not—that part disgusts me. I would not have Pelham know for the world; he would despise me more than ever. You may depend upon it, when he makes up his mind to do a thing, he does it."

"But he never thinks of such outrageous things to do."

"However, you are not to suppose that I have given in to him about Lictor yet."

"Oh, Connor!"

"Don't cry out! I'm not going to hurt the brute, or let anyone else hurt him; but I shall keep my word about his not staying here. I came up to tell you, because you

are sure to be the first person questioned, and you had better be on your guard as to what you say. James Morris is waiting for me now in the yard, and we have concocted a capital plan together. Lictor is always unchained at ten o'clock, and let roam about the grounds till morning—at least Pelham thinks so—but already the boys are too many for him. To-night James will manage as he has done before to muzzle Lictor tight and lead him out of the yard. There'll be a car waiting at the corner of the road to take Murdock's grandmother, who has come to see him, back to her cabin, if anybody asks what it is there for; but the old lady'll stay quietly enough in the house till morning; it's the dog, and James, and me, that the car will carry away. I shall take Lictor to a place among the hills that I know of, where there are boys who to please me would hide bigger things than a dog, so that it would take sharp eyes to find it. There he shall stay, till Pelham gives in, owns we're too many for him, and consents to send his pet back to England."

"Con, I don't like it. Pelham does love his dog, and he'll be so bitterly angry."

"How many more boys would you like to see kilt before somebody pistols the animal, for that'll be the end of him if he stays here?"

"Oh, dear, there is the dining-room door opening—I

must go down in a minute. Shall you come back before night?"

"No, I'm going too far away for that; and, Ellen, do you know I've an idea of not coming back at all for a day or so, till the storm's blown over. It would be capital fun being lost. The boys up there, where I'm going, trust me enough to hide me for as long as I choose to keep out of the way. Whatever I see, they know I shall never tell, and I've a fancy for seeing.'

"Connor, you dreadful boy, you must not: mamma would go out of her mind. Imagine all Uncle Charles would say. Even papa would be angry. For my sake give up that part of the scheme at least. Is it not to Hill Dennis's place you are going? Red-haired Dennis, who brought Pelham back from the bog when he was a boy?"

"You had better not know, and then when the row begins, you can't be bullied into telling."

"No, I won't know, but I can't help guessing. You said up among the hills. You will be near enough to Good People's Hollow, to go there the first thing in the morning, before they inquire for you here. Promise me to go there, Connor, or else I won't keep the secret. Then, at breakfast to-morrow morning, I can say you have gone over to see Cousin Anne. It will keep mamma from being anxious, and if Cousin Anne gets to know

all this trouble, she will come over and put us all to rights."

"It's not a bad idea. I believe the hiding will be most complete that way. There will be nothing odd in my having gone over to the Lodge before breakfast; no one will suspect me of taking Lictor there. He will seem to have been spirited away, and no one will ever get a word of the truth out of James Morris. I should like to see Pelham's face when he comes up to the empty kennel to-morrow, and James begins to blarney him."

"I shall not like to see it. You know, Con, I am always on your side whatever you do; but I shall not be able to help being sorry for Pelham. It's a harder thing for him to be made angry than it is for you or me. He can't forgive as we can, because it has been so much greater pain. I know that about him, though he says so little."

"Well, but you'll keep the secret whatever comes? Beyond all, don't let out a hint of James Morris or Red-haired Dennis being in it. What would they say through the country if Miss Eileen turned informer? I'm going to bed now—you understand—tired out with nursing Murdock Malachy all the afternoon. As you open the drawing-room door, I shall be shutting myself into my bedroom with a good loud clap."

"No don't, Connor dear; that's just a useless bit of the scheming I wish you were not so fond of. No one will ask for you, for I think the elders are all busy about something to-day, and have no thoughts to spare for us. I shall keep close to the piano all the evening, and play all the vulgarest jigs and dances I know, to please Mr. O'Roone, and set Uncle Charles off talking to papa and mamma about his daughters' music-lessons, and the grand German and Italian music they perform. I know how quiet that keeps everybody."

CHAPTER V.

"A face tender and wise.
God, what power to bless in the pure eyes!
With a look straight out
On us weak, strewn all about;
A desire to bear, and to bear, and to bear;
A fire kept steady, and strong, and clear;
A prayer to be led near
Unto distress most dire."

Little Sealskin, and other Poems.

THE world, or at least the secluded nook of it in which Happy-go-Lucky Lodge nestled, seemed to have been plunged bodily under water for a day, and lifted up again to dry in the sun, so pure and vividly green, and sparkling with diamond drops, were every blade of grass and clump of fern and flowery gorse bush within its hill-enclosed circle, when Connor next morning reached the turn in the steep road at which the little valley first burst upon his view. It was early, but the range of hills towards the east was broken by a cleft, through which the morning sunshine streamed in solid-looking rays, that made the

green fields and tiny garden plots round the cabins glow like emeralds, and brought out in strong contrast the soft lilac shadows on the opposite hills, and the purple gloom of the mountains in the distance. Connor was too full of his own affairs to have much thought to bestow on the beauty of the morning, yet he could not help pausing for a minute before he began the rugged descent into the Hollow to glance around him. It looked like a nook dropped among the hills and forgotten. Yet, in spite of its seclusion, an air of brisk life and activity pervaded the place. Already Connor could catch the sound of voices, and descry strings of figures verging from different quarters towards a group of buildings that occupied the centre of the valley.

The principal of these, a tall white house, was situated on a jutting-out mass of rock, that had been turned into an island by the waters of a little mountain stream that, after running impetuously down the hills on the western side, suddenly, on reaching the middle of the valley, spread itself out into a shallow pool, and had once lost itself altogether in swamps and bog-land, but was now by judicious violence obliged to gather its waters together a few yards below the stone house, and keep a meandering course through reclaimed plots of potato grounds and meadow land till it found a vent among the eastern hills. The

rocky prominence rose some height above the level of the water, and just afforded space for the tall white house, each corner of which was rounded off into a projecting turret. The front of the house was connected with the mainland by a wide-arched bridge, and facing each of the four turrets stretched four long, narrow, red brick buildings, which, seen from the height on which Connor stood seemed to hang down like ropes from the airy white building on the island, and fasten it solidly to its bearings on the firm earth, as the suspending threads of a spider's web hold it safely swaying in the air.

It was towards these buildings that the children from the cottages and hillsides were wending their way, and as Connor approached the house he heard their voices rising through the open windows from one quarter, in the loud buzz of repeated lessons; from the other in songs mingled with the click of tools and the hum of wheels that told of some sort of manufactory being carried on within. He knew the ways of the Happy-go-Lucky establishment too well to have any curiosity to look in at the work-rooms. The gates of the farm-yard and flower-garden, which had to be passed through before reaching the head of the bridge, were wide open, free to anyone to pass through, and the first person Connor encountered was a wooden-faced old man, seated on a horse-block, with his elbows on

his knees, staring disconsolately at the *débris* of a carriage which lay in a heap in the middle of the yard, and every now and then shaking his head vehemently and making a threatening gesture towards it with his fist. Connor's "Good morning, Peter Lynch. Is it your fine three-wheeler you have got in ruins there?" elicited only a growl such as might have been drawn from a sullen bear by vehement poking, and as his further question as to whether Miss O'Flaherty was at home received only for answer a gesture of the man's thumb towards one of the turrets, he walked on without any further attempts at conversation.

The front door, though it faced the bridge with a flight of white stone steps and a bright knocker, was the last place by which anyone thought of entering the Lodge. Con passed it as a matter of course, and made the circuit of the building, looking into three of the turret bay-windows as he passed till he came to the fourth, where, finding what he was in search of, he calmly crossed his arms on the low sill, put his head in at the window, and waited till the occupant of the room should chance to look his way.

Breakfast was laid out on a small table, close to a cosy-looking turf fire, before which two little white-capped maidens were busy making toast and boiling eggs, with a

good deal of the bustle and importance of juvenile cooks. They were the first to spy Connor at the window, but he made a hasty sign to them to be silent, and the little giggles into which they exploded at the sight were evidently too ordinary accompaniments of their work to attract the attention of a lady who lay half-reclined on a sofa in the window recess, only separated from the open window and from Connor's head by a narrow table, which held her books and work. She had evidently been trying to do two or three things at a time. The table was covered with a quantity of feathers of various colours, which she had been sorting into heaps. She held a little bunch suspended in one hand, but the other was busily turning over the leaves of a large book that lay in her lap, and her eyes were so intently devouring its pages that neither Connor's proximity, nor the twitches at her hair of a tame raven that had perched itself on her shoulder expectant of its breakfast, had power to draw them away. Connor looked straight down into her face, but not a muscle of it changed. It was a pleasant face to look down into: the hair at which the raven was pulling was partly hidden under a falling black lace handkerchief, knotted under the chin; the bright colouring of youth had long since faded out of it, but its pale yellow tints, deadened with streaks of grey, still had a softening and brightening

effect on the rather strongly-marked features and high wide brows round which it was bound. The cheeks, though lined and worn, had not lost their original delicate pink and white; and even the absorbed attention to which the face was composed, did not quench an expression of energy and alertness that was almost youthful.

Connor's patience was exhausted when the third leaf was turned; the toast and eggs were growing cold on the table, and he was hungry. He leaned a little further into the room, and blew a cloud of feathers into the wrapt reader's face. She looked up suddenly, but without start or exclamation—rather with an air as if she had been so far away it took a second or two to get back again; and Connor, propping his elbows on the window-sill again, and dropping his face between his hands, had the first word.

"So, Cousin Anne, you and Peter Lynch have come to grief with the three-wheeler. I thought, between you, you had built a carriage that could not be overturned. How was it?"

Full consciousness came back with a flash into the blue eyes in which years had not extinguished the mirth.

"It was not our fault; certainly not Peter Lynch's. By all the rules of mechanism that ever were ruled the

thing could not have overturned. I stick to that and by Peter, whatever anyone says."

"In spite of broken limbs got in the overthrow?"

"No; only a sprained ankle. I tell Peter, to comfort him, that it might just as well have happened any other way—in crossing the bridge, or coming down stairs. Nothing's easier."

"Ah, but it was done in an overthrow of the three-wheeler. The great prime minister driving you himself, eh?"

"Well, yes, Peter was driving."

"I only hope it has overturned his conceit a little. I see it has brought him to his dumb condition, for he would not speak a word to me as I passed through the yard. To the condition of owning that he and you could make a mistake I suppose nothing will ever bring him."

"And we have not made a mistake; the three-wheeler is an admirable invention, and could not have been overturned if by ill-luck it had not been built the least taste of an inch higher in the back than I intended. As soon as I am well, and Peter has recovered his spirits, we shall set to work to build another. You heard of the accident yesterday at Castle Daly, I suppose, and your father good-naturedly sent you off to triumph over me?"

"Well, no, not exactly; it was Ellen that told me to come here."

"Why don't you jump over the sill, then, and sit down to breakfast?"

"I'm waiting for you to tell me I'm welcome."

"Of course you're welcome. Would you like me to say 'as flowers in May'—or what form of flattery will satisfy you?"

"Say 'under all circumstances.' If I were a thief running away from justice, for example, should I be kindly welcome then?"

"What ridiculous humour is the boy in this morning?"

"It would be so pleasant to know I could never come amiss to you. And there are a great many different ways of thieving. One might have to steal something at some time in one's life, on principle, for the glory of God and the Church, as Henry II. stole Ireland, and as all the fierce O'Flahertys of old times fleeced the poor-spirited Lynches of Galway, leaving you one for your bond slave, or bond master. Which is it now?"

"If it is only nonsense about O'Flahertys and Lynches you are talking, you had better come in and eat your breakfast before the eggs are cold. You must have left home in the middle of the night. How come you here so early?"

"There was a car coming along with one of the boys, and he brought me to the turn of the road. But I *am*

hungry. I say, Anne, if you have one of your famous fish pies in the larder, it would not be amiss to send for it. It's best to be candid on such points, you know; and, as I said before, I just am hungry."

Anne laughed, and ordered the pie. By the time half of it was despatched, Connor's tongue was at leisure for conversation again.

"Well, if there's a capital dish anywhere it's a 'Happy-go-Lucky' fish pie. No one like you for turning out a good thing to eat, Cousin Anne."

"If there's a boy anywhere great at the blarney, it's Connor Daly."

"But how about the supply of fish? Have you completed your invention yet for making the fish catch themselves on rods stuck through the walls of the house, and ring little bells at the same time to warn you to come and pull them in, as the fish of the monks of Cong used to do?"

"If we have not rivalled the monks of Cong yet, we have no reason, as you see, to complain of a failure of provisions—and, by the way, you have come on a lucky day. The pond on the east of the house wants cleaning. They are going to let off the water to-day, and there will be a grand take of fish. As I can't look after it myself——"

"Thanks to Peter Lynch."

"And as poor Peter is a little out of spirits——"

"In a black temper."

"Out of spirits, you may as well go out and see the spoil divided. I have decided to give the fish to the women of the valley who can cook it properly. The bad cooks are to get nothing."

"I quite understand; such wretched creatures as refuse to follow 'Happy-go-Lucky' receipts deserve to starve. But, I say, Anne, who judges the cookery? Do you make them all bring little bits of their dinners for you to taste, that you may judge of their skill and obedience?"

"No, you saucy boy, I take the husbands' opinion about the cooking, and so you see if any of them have been mean-spirited enough to defame their wives, they'll suffer for it. Now, you may as well go off to the pond, for I have plenty to do this morning."

Cousin Anne betook herself again to her book and her feathers, but these only served as interludes to the real business of the day which thronged round her as the morning worn on. The Lodge stood conspicuous in the middle of the valley, and seemed to lie so directly in the way of all comers and goers, that no man or woman in the district thought of setting out on or returning from any

business a little more important than ordinary, without turning in at the bridge-head, to tap at the window and consult the Lady, or report progress, on his or her proceedings. Now, it was a little group of children who came to show the baskets full of cranberries they had gathered since morning on the hills, and to receive the slice of white bread and butter which Miss O'Flaherty's little handmaidens were instructed to serve out to the possessor of the best-filled basket. Now, it was a man with an important face, carrying something mysteriously wrapped up in a red neckerchief, which something, when its bearer had filled up the window opening by thrusting his person through it, and bringing his face close enough to Miss O'Flaherty's to whisper in her ear, was discovered to be the sum of money received yesterday in Ballyowen market for a litter of pigs, and brought to the Lady, to be kept safe out of the way of an extravagant wife and grasping son, till its proper owner had studied what he wished to do with it.

A little later, it was a woman with wild black hair streaming over her shoulders and cloak awry, sobbing as the ran, who had come hot from a quarrel with her husband, and who would have made the whole place ring with her outcries, if Anne had not contrived to take possession of the hands she was wringing passionately,

and draw her down into such a position within the window-seat that she could look straight into her eyes; after which the conference went on quietly, between eagerly-spoken complaints that changed by degrees into sobbing murmurs on one side, and short, soothing sentences extending into remonstrances and exhortations on the other.

"Eh, but it's your ladyship that leads the happy life intirely," said the poor woman, recovering herself sufficiently at last to draw the tear-drenched corner of her cloak from her eyes, and glance admiringly round the sunshiny room,—"wid nothing to do but plase yerself night and day, and never knowing what it is to have a man to contend wid. It's aisy talking for the like of you."

"I dare say you are right," said Anne O'Flaherty, smiling; "I don't suppose I do know as much about the real sorrows of life as do most of you women who come to me for advice; but you know, Biddy, it's standers-by that see furthest into the game; and any way it's not my own words I give you. 'Twas the wisest man ever lived wrote that little word, about the soft answer I want you to take home with you; and, for the rest, you're not the faint-hearted woman to be willing to give up your man for the first hard words that have passed between

you. Go home and cook the fine fish I shall send you, for his supper, in a way that'll make him just ashamed of himself."

As interludes to the business of the elder people, Anne's attention was every now and then claimed by the occupants of the four buildings that flanked the house where the children of the valley were assembled, learning their lessons and practising one or other of the little arts that Anne had introduced among her people. In the midst of all came running messengers, bare-footed gossoons with elf-locks flying to report the progress of the operations that Connor and his party were carrying on at the pond below, and to carry back her instructions and congratulations on the success of their sport.

Connor was quite in his element, and did not allow himself to be troubled by any uneasy thoughts about the effect his disappearance might have produced at home. Ellen knew all about it, and might be trusted in any emergency that arose to look after his interests at all events. The habit of relying upon Ellen to bear the first brunt of the blame due to his escapades was of such old standing that the selfishness of the proceeding scarcely struck him. If he had been present and seen the trouble going on, he would have been forward enough to take his share, but out of sight of it he could no more help

throwing himself with zest into any amusement that came in his way than he could help breathing.

Anne did not trouble him with embarrassing questions; it was not her way. People who came to her with anything on their minds, generally took her into their confidence before they had been many hours in her company; and she could always wait.

When the house was still in the evening, Connor took possession of a low seat by Anne's sofa, and amused himself by turning out a table-drawer which contained plans, drawings, and half-finished models of all the mechanical contrivances that had haunted Anne's inventive brain since the last time he had weeded out her private repository; and when he had done criticizing and she defending these, he made her laugh by giving a representation of Sir Charles Pelham opening out his views on Ireland to his father and Mr. O'Roone. Only once in the course of the evening, when Anne, tired out with laughing and talking, lay back on her sofa to rest for a few minutes, was he in danger of telling his secret.

"Do you remember, Anne," he began, suddenly, after a little interval of silence, "one day last summer, when we drove down to the shore and brought back a quantity of shells you wanted for something you were making? Some of the shells turned out to have hermit crabs in them. I

put them into a jar of salt water to keep them alive, and in the morning we found that they had fought and torn each other out of their shells. You cried about it. Yes, you did, Anne—I saw you. You said it was cruel to shut fierce creatures up in a small space, where there was nothing for them to do but tear each other to pieces."

"Well, what then?"

"Oh, I was only thinking that I know people who are a good deal like those hermit crabs. Shut them up together even for a rainy day, and they fight—not to death exactly; but they tear each other out of their shells—the worst part of each other, you know; the vexation and dislike and contempt, that used to be so covered up, you did not know it was there. Such people had better get out of each other's way anyhow."

"I don't know about *anyhow*," said Anne, reflectively.

"Then just look here," Connor began,—but at that moment a bell in some down-stairs region rang, and a troop of maidens flocked in for evening prayers. There was no opportunity for the conversation to be renewed that night, and as Connor went up to bed he could not help congratulating himself that his impulse towards confession had been arrested. Anne would not have given him any peace till he had restored Lictor to Pelham, if once she had heard the particulars of the quarrel. And Connor thought he might

as well let himself have as long a respite as possible before disagreeable concessions had to be made.

It was not till the third morning, just as he and Anne and Peter Lynch in recovered spirits were engaged in an eager discussion over the best method of repairing the three-wheeled car, that he espied his father approaching the house on horseback.

"I think I shall go down to the old stone quarry, and watch the men blasting; they are at work there this morning," he said. "Here's my father coming to pay you a visit. He always likes to have you to himself, and you'll know where to find me when I'm wanted."

"Oh, Connor, then you have been doing something you are ashamed of. I did think you would have told me honestly, and not let me shelter you on false pretences," said Anne reproachfully.

"I'll come all right when I'm wanted; but you may just as well hear what he has got to say first; and, Anne, while you are listening, remember what I said to you about those precious hermit crabs, and you'll acknowledge that I was in the right in what I did."

"So you always are by your own account, Connor."

By this time Mr. Daly was near enough to the house for Anne to notice the attitude in which he sat his horse, and the general air of his figure.

"You had better shut the window, Peter," she said, "and wheel my sofa out of the recess, that the people may understand I am not to be interrupted. I shall not be able to think any more about the car to-day."

She felt sure that some deeper trouble was weighing on her cousin's mind than could be caused by any boyish misconduct of Connor's.

CHAPTER VI.

"Hapless nation—hapless land,
Heap of uncementing sand;
Crumbled by a foreign weight,
And by worse, domestic hate.

God of mercy, God of peace,
Make the mad confusion cease;
O'er the mental chaos move,
Through it speak the light of Love."

ANNE'S first glance at Mr. Daly's face when he entered her room confirmed her fear that he had come to announce a serious mishap.

"Is anybody ill at Castle Daly? Have you been really made anxious by Connor's disappearance?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, no; Ellen knew he was here, and told her mother so. He has behaved ill, and I am very angry with him. I have some bad news for him too, that will punish him more than my displeasure; but all that will keep. I want some talk with you first, if it is possible to get a quarter

of an hour's conversation here without half the inhabitants of the Hollow for audience."

"I have secured that we shall not be interrupted."

"And you can actually spare me the time?"

"I think you need not ask that."

But with all these preliminaries the conversation was long in beginning.

Mr. Daly wandered restlessly about the room for a considerable time, pausing before the numerous cabinets and little tables to take up and seem to examine carefully the various ornaments, all of home manufacture, that were scattered about.

"Cousin Anne," he began abruptly, at last, "you were a wise woman to refuse to marry me when I asked you about this time twenty years ago."

"Cousin Dermot," she answered, "you were a foolish boy twenty years ago, when you asked a woman older than yourself, whom you did not love, to marry you."

"What makes you say I did not love you? I thought I did; and I am sure I swore it often enough."

"But I knew you did not, and you know it now; so if you will go back to look at old times, take care to see them in their true light, not more promising than they were."

"I should have loved you if you had listened to me. I wonder, if you could have foreseen the mess I have made

of my life, whether you would have taken me out of compassion."

"No, I should not; I had too much respect for you and for myself, Dermot, to marry you for the sake of saving you the trouble of managing your own life, and it would not have answered if I had."

"If *you* had ever come to despise me, Anne, it would have been for my real sins, not for little oddities of manner and inconsiderate impulses that are too much bound up in the heart of me ever to be put off. Just blame is wholesome; it is the dull, silent, dead weight of opposition to one's whole nature that crushes all the life out and leaves one a dead, stupid log, to be drifted about by the tide of events."

"May I ask one question? Are you talking of a remediable trouble? If not, is there any use in looking at it?"

"Is there any use in crying out when one is in great pain? May not one allow one's self at rare intervals the luxury of grumbling? You have never had a great pain in your life, Anne."

"So everyone tells me," said Anne, smiling.

"And I claim a right to inflict grumbling on you, seeing that you refused to give me the chance of having nothing to grumble about. There was another expectation I had of you, Anne, that you failed me in."

"I! how did I fail you?"

"When I brought my young wife home here to struggle with difficulties she was hardly fit to meet, I trusted to you to make her path smooth for her. I thought you would instil your magic of governing into her, and teach her to win the people and tolerate their ways, a thing she has never yet been able to bring herself to do. I even fancied that if misunderstandings should arise between us (such different natures as we are), I might trust to your old knowledge of me to interpret me to her, and gloss over my faults with the glamour of your sisterly indulgence. I pictured you two living together as sisters."

"It was an extremely masculine fancy, Dermot; and if you had really wished to carry it out, you should not have let her see me for the first time when I was dressed in a red cloak of native manufacture, and standing up to my ankles in a bog with half the population of the Hollow vociferating round me. She has never recovered the shock of that introduction."

"I wanted her to see how you brought order out of disorder, and managed the unmanageable. She has the same ends in view as you have, and as she and I fail, and you succeed, surely she might let us learn of you."

"No, no, my ends are a long way from hers, and she would not be satisfied to come at them by my means. We are all children together in the Hollow, you see, Dermot.

Some wise man has said that an unmarried woman, however old she may be, always remains something of a child; and in my case it answers very well. I can be content to coax and scold and rule despotically my fellow-children, without expecting too much from them or being discouraged by their outbreaks and vagaries. It is far harder for her, who had been used to grown-up men and women for servants and dependants."

"That sounds like saying that Irish men and women are nothing better than children. What do you call me?"

"Hardly as grown-up as some people. But, indeed, I only meant our uneducated, wild, West country people here."

"I am very much obliged to you for giving me such a philosophical reason for coming to the conclusion that our household will never work well together. You can't blame me now for what I have come to tell you. Anne, I have given it all up. I made up my mind last night and told my wife, so there is no going back now. I am going to turn absentee. Being convicted of incapacity to manage my own affairs by my brother-in-law, I have consented to put them into the hands of an agent of his choosing, who is to live at Castle Daly and keep a tight hand over the tenants, while we pass our time in England or abroad—till Pelham is of age, at all events. Now why don't you ex-

claim—why don't you remind me that I have sworn a hundred times that nothing should induce me to skulk out of the country and leave my people to the mercy of a stranger? Where's your indignation?"

"You said you had made up your mind, and could not go back."

"That's no reason for not abusing me. Come, say something, good or bad; nothing is so ominous as silence from you."

"What can I say but that it is a very sudden resolution?"

"Not so sudden as it seems. For years I have been gradually pushed towards it. You don't know the force of a persistent wish in the mind of a person with whom you have to pass all your days, and whom you are always trying and failing to satisfy with something else. There is an overpowering mesmerism in it. The moment comes when the temptation to end the silent struggle of wills becomes too strong to be resisted. Anything for peace, one says at last."

"But will it be peace? Won't you begin to have a persistent wish to get home again? How shall you feel?"

"Good for nothing, and miserable; but what of that? My wife tells me she has been miserable here for twenty years, and thinks it is my turn now. There

should be give and take in matrimonial arrangements, should there not?"

"I cannot but think she might be made happy here, if only——"

"Let me finish your sentence—'if I had done my duty and been prudent years ago.'"

"No, if you would begin to do your duty and be prudent now. Shut up Castle Daly by all means, if you can't, as indeed I know you can't, afford to live in it; but don't leave the neighbourhood. Stay and do the needful work yourself. I can't imagine why you don't. It is not lack of energy or want of thought that has kept you idle all these years."

"Want of thought! No, indeed; it is too much thought —thought that has killed hope. You talk of my not being grown up. If looking before and after is the characteristic of a man, I am one above others, for I do nothing else. It has paralysed my hands for other doing. What is the use of throwing seed into ground that is chokeful of dragons' teeth? There are harvests of evil to be reaped in this land before anything else can come; and seeing that as plainly as I do, I have no energy for labour. If you were to die to-morrow, Anne, Good People's Hollow would be a bog again in a few years, and the people you are trying to drag up into civilization would be as open as any of their

neighbours to have their passions roused by the first schemer who appealed to the old grudges and hatreds and wild hopes that centuries of cherishing have made stronger than anything else in their natures. There would soon be not a trace of your work left."

"Granted; but what is that to me? If I can go up to Him who gave me my work, hand in hand with one brother or sister whose life I have made happier and better, it will be enough. That little bit of good will live as well as the evil you talk of, and survive it. I have nothing to do with the sowing or reaping of other people's harvests."

"You are freer than I am, Anne. We come back to the root of my difficulty again. Whatever other enemies I make, I can't bear to have foes of my own household; and within the last twenty-four hours I have come to see that, if I don't yield this point of going away, there will be a division among us that will make family union for the future an impossible thing. You must hear how far the antagonism has gone before you judge. And that brings me to the principal cause of my being here to-day. A fine piece of work of Master Connor's it is that I have to tell you of. Has not he told you himself?"

"No. I hope it is not anything wrong—nothing worse than a wild prank that has turned out ill."

"It has turned out very ill; and unluckily the prank, if

he means it for one, was aimed at his brother, who is too like his mother to be a happy subject for pranks. Pelham, I must tell you, had a favourite dog sent from England, to which (as it was a good house-dog and barked at beggars) our servants took a thundering dislike. Unluckily, a few days after its arrival it threw down and seriously hurt a little boy who had come to the place on an errand for Connor. Ellen and Connor were mad to have the creature sent away on the instant, and Pelham just refused to part with it, as well he might, not choosing to be hectored by his younger brother. Small blame to him for that, you'll say. I was too full of other things that day to give any heed to these quarrels. Ellen lays the blame on Pelham's contemptuous manner; but, anyhow, Connor's spirit was roused, and he was resolved to have his way by fair means or foul. He connived with some of the servants to get the dog out of the yard, and carried it off himself and gave it into the keeping of two men well noted in the neighbourhood for mischief —Pat Hanalan and Red-haired Dennis, whom the gaugers have been hunting from hill to hill the last twelve months on account of a clever little still they have between them. I confess I've a sort of kindness for the rogues myself, and can't be as angry with Connor for colleaguing with them as I ought to be, for many a laugh have he and I had

together over stories of the clever shifts they've been put to. Dennis professes to feel himself safe on my ground, and considers that he has a sort of claim on my protection for having long ago found Pelham, when he had strayed away from home and was lost on a bog, and brought him safe back to the Castle. Maybe I have winked at his misdeeds long enough to make it seem hard that one of my household should turn on him—Pelham, too, who might have thought that he owed him a kindness."

"But I don't understand yet. How do you know that Connor gave up Pelham's dog to those men? And if he did, what harm has come of it?"

"I'm coming to that if you'll let me. We did not connect Connor's absence with the disappearance of the dog at first. Ellen told us he had gone to you, and I thought it was to work off a fit of the sulks. My wife and Pelham, skilfully misled by the hints of a sharp young groom who I strongly suspect was in Connor's secret, fixed their suspicions on a beggar-woman and a pedlar who had been about the place on the day of the accident. My energetic brother-in-law went off in haste to set the constables on the track of these people. It was a wrong clue, but it led to the right game. As the constables, with Pelham at their head, were scouring the country, they heard the baying of a hound, as it seemed, far down in

the centre of a hill. The sound guided them; they scrambled down a steep cleft in the mountain, found the entrance to a cave that had escaped all prying eyes hitherto, and succeeded in capturing not only the plant and the men they had been after so long, but the dead body of Pelham's unlucky favourite, who had been pistolled, of course, the instant the distillers had an inkling that their enemies were in their neighbourhood."

"So the poor dog was actually dead?"

"Yes, and the two men are in prison, committed for dog-stealing, as well as for the other offence. They never breathed Connor's name, mind you, when they were brought before me. Ellen came out with the story when she heard their fate, and you may imagine how disgusted I was. Connor is the person to blame, but all the ill-will will fall to Pelham's share, for he was the moving cause of the capture. He did not even recognize Dennis. He stood by while the constables did their work, saying very little, I am told, but showing bitter anger at the fate of his dog. The thing will never be forgotten; it's a story that will stick to those two boys for the rest of their lives here."

"Connor will be bitterly sorry."

"I hope he will have some comprehension of the harm he has done; the thing itself is no worse than a dozen other escapades that have passed unnoticed, but coming

just at this moment, it has been like a spark falling on a ton of gunpowder, and produced a general explosion. He could hardly have done anything to illustrate more cleverly the evil effects of the home education I have insisted upon for him and Ellen, or to cut every ground of argument, for keeping ourselves together, from under my feet. Last night, after Ellen's confession, it all burst out—my wife' s long-suppressed wish to leave the place, and disapproval of my indulgence of the younger children; my brother-in-law's pious horror at my debts and extravagance. Small blame to me, I think, if I turned tail in the combat, and owned myself beaten at last. My own sweet colleen came in for her share of the storm with her father. They blame her for keeping Connor's secret so long. If I can work myself up into a proper state of anger against him, it will be by thinking of the state of her blue eyes this morning. Well, since I can't protect her from blame, let them try their hands and make her as much of an Englishwoman as it's in her to be. When we all come back again, if we ever do, there will be less excuse than there is now for our splitting into an English and an Irish faction, whose chief interest in life is to find fault with each other. Connor will have broken with his old associates, and will not stand out in such contrast to Pelham as to lead to perpetual remark."

"How has Pelham behaved about it all?"

"He does not say much; in fact, the lad never opens out to me. Since Connor's share in the plot against his dog came out, he is silent and looks injured. His mother looks at him, and refuses to take any notice of poor Ellen when she hovers between the two of them, and offers little services to win a look of forgiveness. It is as much as I can bear to see it in silence; yet Heaven forbid that I should put myself at the head of a faction against my wife and my eldest son. Now where is Connor? I must take him home at once. I suppose Peter Lynch can mount him?"

"He is down at the stone quarry, expecting a severe lecture, I hope. Shall I summon him?"

"No, I will walk down to meet him; and tell Peter to have the horses ready as I pass through the yard."

Cousin Anne lay back on the sofa when she was alone, longing for an opportunity to say a few soothing, peace-making words to her fiery-tempered young cousin before he left her; but her first glance into his face when he burst hastily into the room to say good-bye showed her he was in no state for even her words to have a good effect. He entered with a jaunty, defiant air, meant to carry off his pale cheeks and eyelids swollen with passionate tears.

"So, Cousin Anne," he said, "I shall be obliged to leave you and Peter to manage the mending of the three-wheeled car by yourselves. I'm very sorry, you see, but since I've been away they've contrived to make a disgusting mess of things at home, the idiots! and I'm wanted to set them to rights."

"Connor, I wish you would let me say a word to you."

"No, no, Anne; if you are to begin to improve the occasion, I vow I'll cut my throat or run away to America and never be heard of more. I'd be off this minute, that I would, only it would be a shabby trick to leave Ellen and those poor fellows in the scrape they've been brought into by interfering idiots."

"That you have brought them into, Con. Yes, it is a very shabby trick not to dare to acknowledge all the consequences of one's own acts and to bear all one can of them."

"But, Anne, you know—you know—I never meant such consequences as these."

"The letting out of water, Con; that is what the beginning of strife is, you know. Of course you can never tell where the current will carry you. I am very sorry for you. I only want to persuade you to take your share of blame bravely, and then you'll have got more than half-

way to forgiving other people what you think they have been guilty of towards you and your friends."

"No, I'll stick to my friends, right or wrong, and would to the end, if it was a man they had murdered instead of a wretch of an old cur; and I'll never forgive Pelham for despising us all for being Irish. It's that and nothing else he means by all he does, you may take my word for it."

CHAPTER VII.

"Adieu to evening dances, when merry neighbours meet,
And the fiddle says to boys and girls, 'Get up and shake your feet.'
To 'Sanachus' and wise old talk of Erinn's days gone by—
Who trenched the rath on such a hill, and where the bones may lie
Of saint or king, or warrior chief; with tales of fairy power,
And tender ditties sweetly sung to pass the twilight hour;
The mournful exile's song is now for me to learn."

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.

A FORTNIGHT passed before either Anne O'Flaherty or her equipage were in such a state of repair as to warrant their tempting the perils of the rugged mountain road between the Hollow and the head of the Lough; but as during that time no direct news of the Castle Daly household reached her, she made her first expedition out of her own dominions in that direction.

Peter Lynch had by that time recovered his spirits and his belief in his own and his mistress's infallibility, temporarily shaken by their ignominious overthrow in the car, and was as well prepared as usual to entertain her through half a day's journey with contemptuous comparisons

between the condition of their neighbours' property and the cultivation of the Hollow; but as the way lay chiefly through Mr. Daly's estate, Anne was not in a mood to accept his flattery as graciously as usual. Her eyes were sufficiently open to the tokens of neglect and mismanagement that Peter eagerly pointed out, but she could not look forward with any satisfaction now to the hope of remedy. The pleasure of seeing the low thatched farm-houses, with their tumble-down barns and fences, replaced by better buildings; red "murphys" taking the place of yellow "lumpers" in the potato-grounds round the cabins; and an improved breed of pigs ousting the long-nosed, long-eared Connaught variety of the animal from its nook in the chimney corners, would be lost to her, if the improvements she had so long advocated were to be the work of a stranger. It was almost a surprise to her when the house came into view at last, to find it looking just as usual, with all its doors and windows open to let in the sunshine, and cheerful signs of occupation in the gardens and court-yard—she had been so busy picturing it to herself as shut up and deserted.

She observed a little group of people standing out in the sunshine before the front door, when she drove up to the lodge gate. They had not assembled to welcome her, for they were all collected round another vehicle drawn

up before a side door, which seemed to await some last arrangements to take its departure.

Mrs. Daly was among the group, leaning on the arm of a stout middle-aged man, who seemed to be expostulating rather loudly with the servants hanging about the car; while Ellen, with her arms piled with pillows and shawls, stood a little in the rear. Anne left the three-wheeled car to be carried off to the back premises, and exhibited in triumph to his acquaintances there by Peter Lynch, and walked down the drive to announce herself.

Ellen espied her when she was still some yards from the house, and impetuously throwing her load down on the door-step at her mother's feet, rushed to meet her cousin, giving her a frantic squeeze in her arms before she exclaimed, breathlessly,

"Oh, Anne, Anne, are you really here? Do you know that we are to leave Castle Daly in a week's time from this? I think I should have gone wild if you had not come, and I had had to leave home without seeing you again."

"I think you are wild," said Anne, looking fondly down into her favourite's face, that had a new wistful expression on it that went to her heart. "If I had not come to you, of course you would have come to me. Why, I have been expecting you every day this fortnight."

"It has not been my fault," whispered Ellen; "and I don't think mamma would ever have let me go to you again. Do you know, my Uncle Pelham was dreadfully scandalized at Connor's running away to you, and at you for keeping him. In all that has happened he thinks you quite as bad as Connor. He says almost every day that from all he hears you must be a thorough Irishwoman, and you can't imagine what a dreadful creature that means to him. There he is, standing by mamma."

"A fine, good-natured-looking gentleman," said Anne. "I think he will bear the sight of me, even in my shabbiest home-made cloak, without injury to his nerves. Let me go and speak to him."

Mrs. Daly advanced a step or two to greet Miss O'Flaherty, and Anne thought that the last few weeks had made a change in her appearance too. The extreme air of invalidism was laid aside, her dress was brighter and more becoming, her step had more life in it, and there was actually a smile—was it a smile of triumph?—on her lips, as, laying a passive hand in Anne's, she said—

"I am very glad to see you are able to come out. Mr. Daly was getting quite anxious. We are so busy preparing for our departure that we did not know how to spare a day to drive to the Hollow. Yet we would not on any account

have left the country for a length of time without saying good-bye to you."

Anne was well accustomed to the loose clasp of the hand, and to the peculiar sensation of being looked at without being recognized, with which the mistress of Castle Daly particularized her greetings to her, but the smile and the triumphant emphasis were something new. A fresh, and perhaps a more galling pin-prick wound than she had hitherto had to harden herself against in that place.

She would have received the remark in silence if the sound of an irritated tap of the foot from Ellen behind had not warned her that it was safest to rush into indifferent conversation at once.

"You are preparing for a departure already, I see," she said, stooping down to pick up one of the pillows Ellen had thrown down; "and the person you are sending away is an invalid, I fear, from Ellen's preparations."

"It is well for Ellen's patients when there is someone to look after their comforts beside herself," remarked Mrs. Daly, with a severe glance at certain cushions and shawls that had rolled down the steep steps and were being trampled under the servants' feet. "A few minutes ago she was ransacking the house for comforts for Murdock Malachy, who is to be removed to the hospital in Galway

to-day, and you see where her preparations are now. You know, I suppose, Ellen, that you threw down the bottle of wine you begged so hard for, and that its contents are soaking your own woollen shawl down there."

"Mamma, you will let me have another," pleaded Ellen, her eyes full of tears, and her face one crimson glow of shame and mortification. "I know I'm very silly, but indeed I could not help it when I saw Cousin Anne."

"Cousin Anne is not much obliged to you for pleading the sight of her as a sufficient excuse for silliness. I think you might have found something pleasanter to say about her on her first introduction to your uncle."

"Come, come; never mind," put in Sir Charles Pelham, who was not proof against the sight of tears in such pretty eyes as Ellen's, and thought his sister rather hard on her daughter at times. "Let Ellen run in and get another bottle of wine, and permit me to shake hands with Miss O'Flaherty, of whom I have heard so much. The child is a good child enough. You should take her as she is, and make allowance for blundering."

"That is kind," said Anne; "if you will make allowance for blundering I see a hope of our all getting on."

Sir Charles was puzzled. The warm smile and gracious cordial air contradicted anything of sarcasm he might have suspected in the words.

"A much better-looking woman than I expected, and quite the lady. I wonder why Elinor hates her so!" was his mental verdict; while Anne, reading his thoughts in the slow glances of his eyes backwards and forwards between herself and Mrs. Daly, came to her own conclusion.

"He has prejudices, but he is a man," she thought, "and therefore capable of justice; *he* would never, if he watched us for twenty years, arrive at understanding the feeling that obliges us two poor women always to show the worst side of ourselves to each other. No, not if he knew—as of course he cannot know—that one of us never forgets that she has before her the woman who has married the man she loved, and the other that she is talking to the woman who refused the man she has married."

A little commotion among the crowd round the car now recalled Mrs. Daly's and Sir Charles's attention to the subject that was occupying them when Miss O'Flaherty made her appearance. Ellen returned from the back premises with the news that poor Murdock was really coming out now, and a dozen eager, curious, sympathetic faces prepared for lamentation and condolence were turned towards the door.

"Is he so very bad?" asked Anne, catching sight of a bent figure, slowly crutching himself down the front hall

helped or rather hindered by an old woman, who supported an elbow, and broke out into tremulous "Ochones" and "Saints presarve us," at every painful step.

"This is precisely how it is," explained Sir Charles, taking the answer on himself. "If the lad had been sent off to an hospital a month ago, when the accident occurred, as I advised, he'd have been well by this time, and would have had nothing to remind him of his mishap for the rest of his life; but he has been kept here, with a dozen people fussing after him, exciting him with news, and setting aside the doctor's orders till it has become a serious case. I have interfered pretty strongly to have him sent away and put under proper treatment, for I saw it was his only chance of getting well."

"It's the thought of our going away, and of the parting with Connor, that has taken all the heart out of him, and hinders his recovery," whispered Ellen.

"Now, my good woman," exclaimed Sir Charles, as old Mrs. Malachy came within hearing, "do show a little self-control, and help your grandson into the car without all that hubbub. You can't make his legs straight by crying over them; you only distress him and everybody near by your foolish outcries."

"By this and by that, is it stone and ice that ye think me heart's made of, that I'm not to weep and shed tears

when I see me own boy, that was the light of me eyes, and all that I have left me in the world, barring the son that's breaking his heart, this minute in prison along of yer honour's orders, turned out a cripple, and helpless, to die in a strange place. I'll tell ye this plainly, yer honour, and my lady——" By this time, Mrs. Malachy had arrived full in front of Sir Charles and Mrs. Daly on the door-step, and, coming to a sudden halt, fixed on them two eyes in which a flash of angry fire seemed to burn up the tears. "I'll tell ye this plainly, if ye'd left the boy alone to die aisy in the bed where he was taken, afther he had been kilt at your door by a wild baste, it's broken-hearted I would have been, but I would not have had the sore angry heart I carry this day; I'd have borne the will of God paceable if ye'd let the boy die aisy under the roof that he loves."

"Then you are a stupid, ungrateful old woman," answered Sir Charles, not angrily, but in the cheerful decided tone, he thought, appropriate to uneducated old people, whose intellects could only be reached by strong words and shouting—"a very stupid and a wicked old woman, I should call you, to wish your boy to die in one bed instead of getting better in another. You ought to be extremely grateful to Mrs. Daly and to me for taking all the pains we have to find out an hospital where he'll be quickly

cured, and to Mr. Pelham Daly for paying the expenses of his removal."

"Yer honour need not have been afraid that I should make a mistake about who it is we're beholden to for this same sending away. Shure the names ye've spoken were in my heart, and on my lips, and I'll never forget them; but ochone! ochone! that it should be in this house that a hard thing is done by the orphan and the poor, that'll bring the curse of God down upon it."

"Come, come, my good woman," interrupted Sir Charles, putting his hand authoritatively on her shoulder, and giving her a gentle shove down the steps, "you are behaving very ill; you had much better hold your tongue, cursing and that sort of thing cannot be allowed. I'm a magistrate myself in my own country, and I feel it my duty to put a stop to bad language, so get into the car at once; and perhaps Mrs. Daly will be good enough to forget your ungrateful conduct."

Molly tottered down the steps under the impulse of the shove, but turned round undaunted at the bottom to shake her withered fist at the house.

"Forgit, will she! No, yer honour, it's remimber, she will, one day, when she sees her own carried in the same way that mine's turned out. It's remimber my words she will."

"Be silent, you old hag," roared Sir Charles, thoroughly roused to anger at last. "How dare you frighten the ladies by your wicked nonsense! If you speak another word you shan't go to the hospital with your grandson. We'll leave you behind in Ballyowen to make acquaintance with the inside of your son's present lodging."

"Kindly welcome you are to take me where you plase, for it's against my will I go either way," said Molly, deliberately mounting the car, and dropping down in a heap in one corner of it. "I've said the word that was burning in me, and had to come out; and now word nor look, curse nor blessing, will the place git from me again."

"Someone lift the sick boy in, and let's have done with it," said Sir Charles, impatiently.

Murdock had remained on the top of the steps, pale and panting, after the exertion of moving down the hall; but when, in obedience to Sir Charles's orders, two servants lifted him into the car, he sent wistful glances round, as if in search of someone.

Ellen divined the meaning of the look, and whispered to him, while Anne settled the pillows under his head,

"You'll see Mr. Connor in Ballyowen, Murdock. He'll be waiting at the car-office to help you into the public car, and wish you good-bye again. He went in to-day to see your uncle, and he'll bring you good news of him."

"And the other young gentleman?"

"He has gone into Ballyowen to-day too with my father; but you don't want to see him, do you, Murdock?"

"If he'd cared to see me I'd have left a word for him now I know I'll die. He's your brother, Miss Eileen, and Mr. Connor's. And now I know I'll die, I'd not like ill-will to rest for ever betwixt us, for the sake of a dog that's dead."

"But you are not going to die, Murdock," said Anne, cheerfully; "the hospital is a very different place from what you think it; and before the month's out I'll come and see you there, and if you don't like your quarters I'll carry you off to Good People's Hollow, where I defy you not to live and get well, and where you'll hear every bit of news of Miss Eileen and Mr. Connor that comes to me."

A change came over the boy's face as if new life had been put into him.

"Thin maybe after all I will live—if Miss O'Flaherty says so. Maybe I will."

"Yes, I do say so—only keep up your heart till I see you again. And now good-bye."

Mrs. Daly had slipped her arm within her brother's arm, and come close to him during Goodie Malachy's harangue; and now she drew the shawl she wore closer round her and shivered a little.

"Let us go back into the house, it is cold here even in the sunshine. How glad I am we are leaving the country so soon. I am not in the least superstitious, fortunately; but I don't think I should ever have got that horrid old woman's threatening face out of my mind if we had stayed here."

"It's the stupid ingratitude of it that provokes me," muttered Sir Charles. "Ingratitude is the one thing I can't put up with; one meets only too much of it among the poorer class in England, I'll allow, but here it seems to be the rule that if you take particular pains to benefit a person, he hates and abuses you in proportion. And they call themselves a good-hearted people. That's what I don't understand."

"Is anyone ever grateful for being benefited against his will?" asked Anne.

"But while they are such ignorant savages as that old hag who cursed us just now, against their will is the only possible way of benefiting them."

"Then you must look out for some other kind of reward than gratitude."

Anne turned to Mrs. Daly. "You are really leaving the neighbourhood in a week's time, and the dear old house will be shut up?"

"Not altogether. A connection of Sir Charles Pelham's,

who is going to act as Mr. Daly's agent, will occupy part of the house. It is a very good arrangement, and enables us to get away sooner than we otherwise should. Mr. Daly cannot bear to linger over a parting; and I confess I am in haste to be gone, for I don't think the place suits my eldest son. I have always hitherto denied myself the pleasure of having him with me on that account, and now we all feel that it is time he took his place in the family. You have not seen him yet, have you? He is out just now with Mr. Daly and Connor; but of course you have come to spend the day."

If the invitation had been twice as ungraciously given, Anne must have accepted it. She felt she must have one more day to add to the many long days spent in that house, which, glanced back upon, seemed to be stepping-stones in her monotonous stream of life—marking all its chief interests and pleasures. As she sat making company-conversation with Mrs. Daly in the drawing-room, or walked about the grounds with Sir Charles trying to listen to his stream of talk, she could not help recollections of past times rising one by one before her. The days when she used to ride over on her pony by her father's side—a proud little maiden of seven or eight—to spend holiday or birthday in playing with the two young cousins, with whom she enjoyed the nearest

approach to brother and sister companionship she knew; the days she sat on the lawn with Dermot's lesson-books in her lap, and Dermot himself lolling on the grass at her feet, trying, with all the force of her will, to keep his erratic thoughts chained to his work for five minutes together, and feeling a little sore at heart all the time from a sense of the unpopular part her conscience obliged her to play. The day when they were fishing in a boat together on the lake, and he confided to her some school-boy scrape he had got into, and she persuaded him at confess it to his father; and they went back to the house together, to the very threshold of old Mr. Daly's study-door hand in hand. The day when Dermot out of perversity would make his horse take a desperate leap over a mountain torrent, and she had been startled by the pain she felt during the moment of suspense as to his safety, into taking herself to task about her feelings towards him for the first time. The summer day when light-hearted, winning Ellen Daly, the elder, pacing the flowery garden walks with her, told her the story of her love for the man who broke her heart afterwards. The day, a year after Ellen's ill-fated marriage, when Dermot, in a fit of despair and disgust with himself, had asked her to be his wife; and she, painfully weighing every word, had seen definitely how much and how little of love there

was in the asking. The day of old Mr. Daly's death, when she had seen Dermot unhappy for the first time, and had half repented the decision she knew was so wise. The days when she had worked hard alone to beautify Dermot's house for the arrival of his English bride. The day when Dermot had come down to meet her in the hall with his baby heir in his arms. Sweet days, painful days —days marked by some pin-prick of a hard saying in them; days coloured with the soberer light of advancing middle-age, when the wounds given in the vivid days of youth were gradually being healed, and new interests and relationships were growing up; till such a day as this was reached when she could walk up and down the old paths philosophizing on her past feelings, and finding in the present that her strongest affections and interests centred round the young generation.

Old and new times seemed bewilderingly mixed up together as the day went on, and she found herself seized upon just as she used to be in long-past days, for private conference with one and another member of the family. Even Mrs. Daly, who had never condescended to so much intimacy before, held her back with a hand on her arm for a minute or two in the drawing-room, when the rest of the party went out for a walk, to say—

"If they speak to you on the subject, I hope you will

say what you can to reconcile Ellen and Connor to the change we are making. You have great influence with Ellen; I wish you would make her see that her discontent is very distressing to her father—I say nothing about myself."

"But you should," cried Anne; "nothing would be better for Ellen than to have such a motive as sparing you put before her, to help her to control her feelings."

"It is not my way to speak about myself," Mrs. Daly answered; "I suppose I should get more consideration if I claimed it, but I cannot speak of my own feelings."

"Not even to her own daughter. What a strange thing that morbid reserve is," thought Anne, as Ellen, who was waiting outside the door, seized the arm Mrs. Daly relinquished, and dragged her out into the garden.

"Now, let us go up to poor Aunt Ellen's favourite turf walk under the larch trees, out of sight of mamma's prim flower borders; there one can get a breath of air. Oh, Anne, do you know what it is to feel all day as if you could not breathe?"

"No, I can't say I do," said Anne, laughing.

"Of course not, for you never do or say things to make people disapprove of you, and look surprise at you out of their eyes, till you feel turned to stone. Anne, you can't

imagine how miserable it has all been here (for me) since Pelham and Uncle Charles came. You see I am so horrid that they can't endure me; and it has opened mamma's eyes wider than ever to all my faults! They try to like me. I can see that, and I study hard to please them, and watch every word; but just when I think I am succeeding, and begin to feel a little happy, out comes some unlucky speech from my real self, and they are disgusted with me again. It is very uncomfortable to be made so that one's nearest relations can only like one when one is pretending to be different from what one is."

It was certainly not a love story that this second Ellen Daly was telling in her aunt's favourite walk; but it interested Anne quite as deeply as that other tale had done, as she looked down on the eager changeful face and wistful eyes fixed on her now.

"Anne, shall I be able to live at all, do you think, among those English relations of ours we're going to, who, if Pelham describes them rightly, always say what they mean, and do what they intend, and will be for ever making allowance for Connor and me? Won't I die before I come back, and see the shadow of Lach-a-cree grow long on our own lake again?"

"No, certainly not," said Anne, "if you are the true-hearted Irish girl I take you for, with courage not to be

ashamed of anything that is not really wrong, and spirit to take and give back a little ridicule kindly."

"It's not ridicule I'll mind, or get," said Ellen, sighing, "for I don't think that at Pelham Court the whole family have a laugh among them. It's my own brother's being ashamed of me that kills me, and the finding out that I always make a mistake and vex him most when I try hardest to please him."

"Say serve instead of please, and you'll find out how much better the trying answers," said Anne. "Ellen, avourneen, you like to be thought like me. Suppose it should turn out that the likeness between us is deeper than on the outside, and that the lesson set for you to learn in your life should be the same as mine."

"I should not think you ever needed to learn any lessons."

"Yes, this one, to put serve, instead of please, into my wishes, when I thought of those I loved best. You try that plan, and you will find what a great deal of trouble and what heartburns it saves you. Let people think of you as they will, and be content if you can only serve them."

"Oh dear, and it's so pleasant and sunshiny to please everybody. I do so like the way people here have of praising one at every moment. Uncle Charles and

mamma say it's hypocrisy; but whether they mean it or not, it's very nice to hear, and I can't think how I shall ever bear to live where I'm just the same as everybody else to everybody. Anne, do you see that bit of a path beyond the house sloping up the mountain, where the shadow of that cloud lies so deep? I shall feel just like that all the time I am away. I shall be walking on, on through the dark, with not a bit of sunshine to warm me."

"And look further on, do you see what bright light the path opens out into when it fairly reaches the crest of the hill? We have made a little story out of it between us. Never mind how dark the shadowy bit is if it really takes you *up*. That's all I ask for you, though you know I love you with all the veins of my heart, Eileen asthore. You are sure to get to the warmth and light sooner or later."

Ellen stood still on the turf walk, and took a long look round her.

"I'll see it all while I'm away, and it will help me," she said. "When things go wrong, and I feel unhappy, I'll say to myself, 'It's just a bit of the path;' and then I shall see the shadow of the cloud, and the road winding up through it, and coming out all clear and white and warm, into the sunshine at the top. But how long will it take climbing up through the dark part, I wonder?"

"I can't promise you that it may not take your whole life-time, avourneen," said Anne. "Never mind; hold your head up, and look towards the light at the end, and the shadows won't hurt you. I was told to give you a lecture on content, and you and I have managed it between us, in our own allegorical, Good People's Hollow fashion. Is not that your father riding towards the house with the boys? We had better go down to meet them, for I have not much longer to stay. I feel sure Peter Lynch is growing very impatient."

On the whole, Anne was not sorry that the remaining farewells and last words had to be short. She disapproved of the course her cousin had resolved to take, too energetically to make her good wishes for its success sound cordial or hopeful, and she was afraid of appearing to use her influence in opposition to the wishes of his wife and brother-in-law if she were tempted to make suggestions.

Mr. Daly made her take a turn or two up and down the terrace before the house while the car was being got ready, but to her relief he did not again attempt to discuss the wisdom or folly of his present plans, and hardly alluded to his approaching departure. His mind was full of the incidents of the morning when he had been into Ballyowen with his sons to attend the trial and procure the release of

the prisoners who had been committed for stealing Pelham's dog.

He was bent on learning the impression that Pelham's looks had made on Anne, and taking her opinion respecting the particulars of his conduct on the occasion of his appearing in court, which he proceeded to relate to her.

"Like his mother, all over, is not he?" he began. "And how he is ever to get on, any more than she has done, with the people here, baffles me to think of. I wish you could have seen the two boys this morning in Ballyowen. The court was of course crowded. You know the sort of reputation Hill Dennis has of being a bold, desperate malefactor, whom no limb of the law has ever succeeded in laying hold of yet. The news that his still had been seized, and he himself committed to prison, spread like wildfire, and brought people from all parts of the country to see how he would comport himself before the magistrates. The boys were both summoned as witnesses, Pelham to swear to the identification of the dog, and Connor on behalf of the prisoners, to show how poor Lictor came into their possession. Connor, with all his brass, was by far the most nervous of the two; he was in a state of wild excitement as we rode into the town, and in the court-house sat biting his pocket handkerchief to pieces, and making grimaces like a mad creature. Pelham hardly

spoke a word, and looked just as usual. I should have thought he was perfectly indifferent, if I had not chanced to touch his hand as we rode into the court-house yard, and found that it was as cold as a lump of ice. When his name was called he stepped forward at once, as if he were thoroughly used to the thing, and answered the questions put to him in a way that I could see made a favourable impression on the magistrates on the bench to-day; and just the contrary on the prisoner's partisans, crowding round the door and straining to catch every word. He really gave his evidence very well, just answering what was asked, with the bare truth, and showing no emotion either way. Dennis leaned out of the dock, and tried to catch his eye; but Pelham looked steadily straight before him, and saw no one but the lawyer who was questioning him. I had gone down into the crowd, and you can imagine the comments I heard. 'Could and dark and hard as never a Daly was before him,' was about the most favourable verdict I could pick up. A little time after, Connor's turn came: he slouched up, looking, I must confess, very like a school-boy who knows he has got himself into a bad scrape, pale and sullen, and somewhat overawed. What he had to say certainly was not very creditable to himself: for a moment I thought his usual pluck had deserted him, and that he would show off badly.

His first answer come out in a shaky, quavering voice, that was quite inaudible down below; but before he had done speaking, Dennis, stretching out his arms towards him over the dock, called out before anyone could stop him—'Spake up, thin, Mr. Connor dear, spake up; it's yerself knows the truth, and has the good heart to spake it out bould and clear, on behalf of them that trust ye.' Connor turned round and looked at the prisoners, and his face quivered and trembled with excitement. For a moment I was afraid he was going to burst into tears, but he gave a great gulp, colour and resolution came back into his face, and after that—well, it would have taken a cleverer lawyer than there was there to get a word out of him unfavourable to the prisoners. He was questioned closely about his previous knowledge of Dennis's mountain retreat, and his acquaintance with what went on there, and you would have been amused with the keen wit and shrewdness he displayed in framing his answers.

"The history of the abduction of the dog he told readily and fairly enough, though even there he could not help slipping in a sentence or two that toned down the ridicule of the story, and gave a certain air of generosity to his own conduct in the matter that one would not have seen in it, certainly, but for his own showing, I don't mean to say that he said a single word that was not literally

true, and I was actually carried away by the speciousness of his story at the time myself, as was everybody else that heard it. But, thinking it over, one sees the difference between his truth and Pelham's. For the life of him, I doubt whether that boy could speak of anything that nearly concerned himself, or anyone he cared for, without putting glamour into his words about it. Now, the other has bare truth on his lips, and would speak it straight out, if it carried death in it to the heart next his own."

"I respect such a character," cried Anne. "We all know too well what comes in the long run of putting the glamour over things. How impossible it is to see correctly, or reach what one is aiming at, when one walks in a mist of one's own raising, golden or dark. Connor's evidence would make him very popular with the people in court?"

"And indeed it did. I hurried our getting out of the town as much as I could, for fear the expression of it should be too plain. Well, those boys have contrived out of their foolish quarrel about a dog to fix a character on themselves, and win hatred and love that will last them their lives, and go far to make or mar them, if I'm not much mistaken, seeing that one of them at least is likely to pass the best part of his life here."

"They could do much to help each other, if they would," remarked Anne. "So sober-minded an elder brother as Pelham might have a very happy influence on Connor's volatile character; while Connor, with his ready wit and art of winning popularity wherever he goes, might serve Pelham well, if once they learned to appreciate each other and came to be close friends as well as brothers."

"Ah, *if*—the question is how you are to bring ice and fire together without their being the death of each other. Have I not been trying it these nineteen years? No, Anne, don't look reproachfully at me as if I were again complaining of my lot, or failing to stand manfully by the choice I made. You had too much of that when I spoke to you at the Hollow last week, and I have come since to a better mind. It was the real thing that took hold of me that day when I rode up to Pelham Court, and had a glimpse of a sober-faced little girl sewing by an open window, and vowed to myself that I would not go away till I had brought a smile to the grave lips. 'Many waters cannot quench love.' I've read that somewhere, and true it is. We Dalys, though we are a feather-headed race, have hearts that hold what they fasten on with a tight grip, and for all that's come and gone, her smile—such a ghost of a smile as I ever get—is as much to me now as it was then; and I find I am as ready to pay heart's blood to

win it. This leaving home is a great wrench," he continued, after a moment's pause, during which his eyes wandered over the landscape, from the dark, purple, cloudy ridge of the distant Marm Turk Mountains to the dancing waters of the lake, and the soft, bright sides of the upward swelling green hills near at hand, that stood out clear in the blue eastern sky. "A great wrench; and I know it will be a weary, worthless sort of life I'll lead all the time I am away from here; but I'm fool enough to feel paid by the change the concession has made in her. She'll be able to endure me better when she gets me away from everything I care for that's not herself. I suppose that's the nature of women."

Anne thought privately that it was not her nature, but she only said: "I am glad you have told me this to-night; it makes me understand your going better. I did not like to think it was just shrinking away from trouble and work that had to be done."

"Perhaps I'm like Connor in putting a little glamour over my doings. It's odd the glimpses one gets into one's character, and how it looks to other people, by watching a reproduction of oneself in another generation. When I perceive the quiet contempt in which Pelham holds Connor, I begin to understand how it is that my wife has never succeeded in taking me at my own valuation. That brings

me to the question we were discussing before—how those two lads are ever to pull together."

"I don't think you should be uneasy. You have yourself experienced how powerful is the attraction a strong, self-restrained, conscientious nature can exercise over a more impulsive volatile one. I should not despair of seeing a bond of more than common affection formed between Connor and Pelham. It may take some peculiar circumstance—perhaps some great trouble—to show the best side of each to the other; but you may depend upon it their lives won't pass without something arising to draw them together. It has never been the habit of your people to have their foes of their own household; and there have been brothers of your race before now, you know, who have gone to the death for each other."

"It is you, Anne, that always leave the word of comfort behind you. Who will I have to talk me out of my troubles when I'm away from you?"

"Well, good-bye. We have come to that, and there's no more to be said. I won't turn back to the house, for I had rather not inflict another leave-taking on Ellen. Send the car after me, and don't come back to put me in. Peter Lynch disapproves utterly of your leaving the country. He won't bestow word or look upon you; and he will make the horse dance if you come near."

CHAPTER VIII.

. . . . The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but variable and shifting; waxing and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in and out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath, but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear."—ELIA.

THE absence of its owner from Castle Daly had the double effect on Anne O'Flaherty of inducing her to shut herself up more than ever with her own subjects in her kingdom, as the little valley was called by its inhabitants, and of causing her thoughts to stray so often to the different localities from which letters directed in Ellen Daly's handwriting reached her, that she often told Murdock Malachy, whom she had taken into her service, when he limped in with the letter-bag, that she did not know whether she really spent most of her time in England or in Ireland.

The busy monotonous days and months slipped by in the Hollow. Anne did not grow less confidential with her servants and inferiors for having lost the only equal companionship within her reach, or for knowing that there was no Mrs. Daly near to look disapproving surprise on her eccentricities in this respect. A good deal of gossip reached her about the sayings and doings of Mr. Thornley, the English gentleman, a relative of Sir Charles Pelham, who had been sent over from England to manage Mr. Daly's affairs in his absence, and who with his sister had taken up his abode at Castle Daly. The accounts reached her filtered through the prejudices and coloured by the grudges (reasonably or unreasonably entertained) of the narrators; and Anne listened sympathetically, as was her wont, without always troubling herself to unravel fact from fiction. A stranger who acted decisively on his own judgment, without condescending to consult old residents, and who in small things and great, from the granting of leases to the breeding of pigs, appeared by all accounts to have diametrically opposite views from her own and Peter Lynch's, was pretty sure to go wrong, and sooner or later do serious mischief.

If Anne's conscience occasionally pricked her for having allowed herself to become a decided partisan on the popular side, she was sure the next day to be made acquainted

with some fresh instance of harshness on Mr. Thornley's part that restored her to self-complacency by seeming to justify any amount of indignation. In some cases of what seemed to her positively unjust treatment of tenants, she thought it her duty to write and give Mr. Daly her opinion of his agent's conduct, and thence resulted an irritating correspondence which usually ended by Anne's having to acknowledge that the version of affairs which Mr. Thornley communicated to Mr. Daly in self-justification, while it materially differed from her own, was substantially the correct one, and that her interference had been ill-judged and uncalled-for. Once or twice Anne cut the discussion short before it reached this point by receiving the rejected tenants as settlers on her own domain, and found that she had introduced hopelessly bad sheep among her flock. If this discovery ought to have mollified her anger against Mr. Thornley, it did not; it only induced her to endorse heartily the sentiment of Peter Lynch—that there was "nothing but ill-luck to be expected in a country when mane-spirited, grasping nagurs had the rule in it; seeing they took all that was best for themselves, and nately shuffled all the burdens on to their neighbours' shoulders."

One day, more than a year after their arrival in the country, Mr. and Miss Thornley rode over from Castle Daly to visit Good People's Hollow, bearing, in guise of an olive-

branch, a package of rare flower-seeds and cuttings, which Sir Charles Pelham had transmitted to them from Pelham Court for Miss O'Flaherty's acceptance, and requested them to deliver with their own hands.

The visit was well-intentioned, but it did not prove happy or well timed. Anne had received a letter that same morning from Sir Charles Pelham, roundly accusing her of adding to Mr. Daly's difficulties by encouraging a disaffected spirit among his tenantry, and she was too seriously hurt by the accusation to be mollified even by a bribe of flower-seeds. Then it had given her a sharp pang to see two strange figures, mounted on Mr. Daly's horse and Ellen's pony, approaching the house by the path along which she had so often watched the coming of her friends. The unaccustomed sounds of a sharp double-knock on the little-used front door, and of strange voices in a strangely high key asking in the hall for Miss O'Flaherty, jarred upon her nerves; and when at last the visitors were ushered into one of the turret rooms, their appearance so utterly contradicted Anne's anticipations, that she felt as much put out as if some one had given her the lie to her face.

The gentleman, who entered first, was most provokingly contradictory to all Anne's expectations. For the last eighteen months she had been picturing Mr. Thornley to herself as a hale, fresh-faced, obstinate-headed John

Bull sort of a man, of the Sir Charles Pelham type, who would talk her down with loud-voiced self-assertion, or crush her good-humouredly with contemptuous patronage. The gentleman with whom she found herself shaking hands was, in the first place, much younger than she had expected, and had much more the air of a scholar than a man of business. He was thin, and not particularly tall, while face, whiskers, hair, and eyebrows partook of a general grey neutral tint that would have stamped the whole person with insignificance if the countenance had not been redeemed by the presence of a pair of very bright grey eyes, looking keenly out from under the sandy eyebrows, and by the play of the lips, which when speaking disclosed two rows of very white teeth, and when silent fell into a curve, that puzzled you to make out whether it was a smile or a sneer.

"That little whitey-brown grocer's apprentice to attempt to rule over us in the place of Dermot Daly. Phew!" thought Anne, and she dropped the hand she could not bring herself to shake cordially. The lady who followed and claimed Miss O'Flaherty's second greeting appeared to be about five or six years her brother's senior, and exaggerated in her person the neutral-tint effect produced by his, so that she gave Anne the impression of having been

cut out, dress, face, hair, and all, from an immense sheet of packing paper. Both spoke in pleasant, well-bred tones, and brought out well-chosen remarks with a deliberation and air of good sense that reduced Miss O'Flaherty to a state of conscious idiocy, and robbed her of all possibility of inventing appropriate replies. Yet though the conversation languished, her visitors were in no hurry to go away, and seemed to find sufficient amusement in looking about them with an air of intelligent investigation, such as would have become a European traveller in a Kamschatkan hut or Indian wigwam. They asked permission to examine the Good People's Hollow works of art that adorned the cheffoniers and chimney-pieces, and they did examine them thoroughly, passing little faintly laudatory remarks upon them to each other, that so put Anne past her patience, that she longed to end the talk by knocking together the two neutral-tinted heads bent critically over her treasures. Every now and then, while indifferent discourse went on, Anne felt that four thoughtful, cold eyes were stealing critical glances at herself, as at some strange, unaccountable possibly malevolent being, whose ignorant animosity was to be soothed away or rendered harmless by the charms of superior wisdom and a magnanimous example of tolerant goodwill. She went out of the room for a few minutes to order some additions to her luncheon, and on approaching

the turret-room door was startled by hearing a laugh actually a natural girlish and boyish fit of laughter, perpetrated by her prim visitors. Peeping in, she saw that Miss Thornley had lifted up a gaily-coloured feather flower wreath from the cheffonier, and was holding it round her brother's head, and making him admire the effect in the cracked looking-glass above the chimney-piece. Connor had cracked the glass long ago, and Anne knew well how distorted everything looked in it.

The two faces had now a tinge of colour and light in them, and the white teeth showed agreeably, but it did not propitiate Anne to find that her guests' stupidity was due to her presence, and that they could be animated at her expense. After luncheon they took a walk through the valley to examine some new cottages Anne was building, and to talk to Peter Lynch about the draining of the bog lands on the hill-side, and the other agricultural improvements for which the valley was famous.

Anne read on Peter Lynch's stolid face a fixed determination not to let a word of useful information be dragged from him by her present visitors, even if he were to be torn by wild horses for his silence, and for peace's sake contrived to leave her prime minister to the lady's management, and monopolize the company of the gentleman herself. He did not like it, and tried at first to show

his indifference to any information on matters of business that came from a lady, by restricting his communications with Miss O'Flaherty to remarks on the scenery, and by turning back to Peter Lynch when he wished to ask a question respecting the nature of the soil or the works he saw carried on. Anne could not help enjoying the puzzled look that Peter's astounding replies brought upon his face. In despair, at last he came back to her, and against the will of both they were drawn, by the vital interest that each took in the topics that opened up, to throw off restraint and talk freely. Anne had the most to say at first. It was the wisdom or folly of the work of her life that was in question, and somehow it was no longer an insignificant countenance into which she looked up as she talked. It was the thoughtful, pondering face, young and yet strangely old, of a deeply interested inquirer, whose verdict she could not help eagerly wishing to win for her own views. The questions he asked showed that he had thought a great deal on the subjects he was investigating, and Anne answered and argued, and her words flew out faster and faster, and began to take colour from her hopes instead of her experience, till she found herself expounding unreservedly to this stranger some of the most cherished dreams and aspirations of her solitary hours. This was while they were investigating the industrial

works and chief points of interest in Anne's little domain: peeping into the new cabins, and measuring the depths of the drains, and pacing the dimensions of the potato plots won from the bottom of the bog; while Mr. Thornley's eyes were occupied with looking as well as his ears with listening. After a lengthened progress they returned to the house by a mountain path where there was nothing to be examined; then Mr. Thornley took his turn to speak, and Anne walked by his side, listening and wishing that she could take back and hide every one of her words. His were quiet and polite enough. He spoke from the calm heights of logical deductions, and proved by well argued and thoroughly established laws of other people's finding out, how baseless all Anne's expectations were; how sure her work was to fall to pieces and fail in the long run; and how miserably inadequate her little bit of partial experience was to set against the world-wide, often proved wisdom on which he founded his theories. As he talked, a huge, crushing, iron monster called Political Economy seemed to loom for the first time on Anne's vision, before whose Juggernaut wheels the prosperity of her populous little valley must inevitably be ground to powder some day. And the demolisher of her bright visions did not appear to find anything to regret in the results he foresaw so plainly. He stood still and looked

over the valley lying bright in the golden sunset, where the labourers stood in groups about the gates of their little garden enclosures, and the women came out and put the babies into their fathers' arms, and children filled the air with joyous evening clamour; and talked quite calmly of the inevitable evils attending on the subdivision of land, and the certainty that an over-stimulated population like the one he was surveying must come at last to the point of being decimated by want and sickness. He did not particularly regret that it should be so. Law was law, fortunately inevitable and unvarying; and the object most to be desired was that its workings should be fully understood and recognized, and that ignorant individual action should be restrained. What did the disappointments and losses of the inhabitants of an obscure valley signify, if only the great principles on which the world progressed were justified and made plain?

For a moment or two Anne hated him with all the strength of her vehement, unreasonable Irish heart; and then, glancing up into the old young face, she caught an expression on it that softened her and changed her indignation into a smile of wonder.

The far-away eyes were so clearly not looking at anything near, but watching the imaginary march of great systems and the results of long ages, with such a strange

unindividual interest, that she could not bring out the charge of heartlessness that was on her lips. It was a sort of enthusiasm that changed the grey, insignificant face, and quickened it with life and power: an incomprehensible enthusiasm for some ideal far out of her sight, yet its existence gave her a glimpse into a mood she could sympathize with better than with the hard sense the words professed. The sentence she did bring out instead of the indignant reproof that had risen to her lips, was perhaps more disgusting than the reproof would have been to her companion.

"You are young yet," Anne said, with a deep sigh; "if you live to be as old as I am, and by chance get interested in the lives and troubles of the poor people you reside among—I think you could—you will learn to be glad to take the most practical way that comes to hand of rescuing them from present degradation and suffering, and you will leave remote consequences to take their chance."

"I shall know that the remote consequences must come when they are due. I shall not expect by any efforts of mine to bring about results which economical and social laws are dead against."

"You speak about laws as if they were alive," cried Anne; "horrible, heartless things—I don't believe in them, I believe in God, and I don't think He is ever dead

against any honest effort to do good to our fellow-creatures, even if it be a somewhat mistaken one. He will take care that some good, physical or moral or spiritual, comes out of it somehow."

Mr. Thornley shrugged his shoulders; his face changed to its ordinary grey quietude, and the light of enthusiasm died out. Here were questions brought up which he had decided did not concern him, into the discussion of which he absolutely and always refused to be drawn. It was his turn now to wish to call back his words, regretting the pearls of wisdom he had cast away. What was the use of explaining principles to a woman, since women never can be touched by anything beyond the range of their own experience, and will not consent to consider the most practical question without intruding subtleties of speculation or emotion that can only lead astray?

There was a strange light in Anne's eyes too as she raised them up from her valley beyond its protecting hills to the golden gates of the sunset, the sight of which troubled him, and woke that unreasonable yearning in his heart kept down habitually at the cost of so much pain. He would not be tempted on to such dangerous ground by anyone.

When Anne had done gazing skyward and walked on, he stooped and gathered a handful of eyebright and sun-

dew, and for the rest of the way home talked diligently of botany and nothing else. Anne walked by his side silent and annoyed; she had felt rather than seen the shrug, and if there was a thing specially repugnant to her, it was the being obliged to discourse or listen to discourse on indifferent subjects with a full heart.

Miss O'Flaherty's hospitality obliged her to bring her visitors into the lodge to take coffee before they set out on their long ride home; and just as they were saying good-bye, Miss Thornley contrived by almost her last words to put a crown on all the petty offences of the day. She stopped before a portrait of Ellen Daly that hung in the entrance hall.

"Ah, look here, John," she said; "this is evidently another likeness of the girl whose portrait used to hang over the chimney-piece in the library at Castle Daly."

"Used to hang!" cried Anne sharply.

"Yes, the library is one of the rooms we are occupying now, and Mr. Daly kindly begged us to make any changes in them that we found convenient. We are not particular as to furniture and comfort, John and I, but we have lived abroad a good deal at various times, and we like the pictures about us to be good if we have any at all. We ventured to dethrone the portrait, which was rather an eyesore, and substituted an engraving we brought with us.

But I assure you the painting is safe ; I carried it up to a dry attic, and covered it over carefully myself."

Mr. Thornley came up and peered with half closed-eyes at the canvas. "Yes, certainly, it is a portrait of the same young lady, but rather better painted, I think."

"The picture at Castle Daly is thought to be particularly well painted by everyone about here," remarked Anne stiffly.

"Young Mr. O'Roone seemed to admire it immensely, I remember," said Miss Thornley, with a smile at her brother that protested against their being bound by the taste of any Mr. O'Roone. "He was very much disposed to quarrel with John for taking it down, but we wanted a good light for our engraving, and it did not occur to us that we were committing an enormity."

They called each other John and Bride, and said "we" and "us" with tones and looks of perfect mutual understanding and confident sympathy, such as can only exist between people of thoroughly congenial characters who have lived long together, and which have a tendency to make outsiders feel somewhat put out of court. Anne just then thought their manners detestable.

When the door closed behind the brother and sister she went back to do homage before her darling's portrait, and atone to it for the slight put upon its counterpart. The

colouring might be a little gaudy, the attitude wooden, but what could people be made of who found even an imperfect representation of that face an eyesore?

The artist had really managed to put something of the true expression in the pictured eyes, or Anne looked till she conjured it up. Wistful, tender, gay, eager and timid all at once, a dozen different and contradictory qualities beaming out their expression through the soul's wide-open windows, blending into a look, a spell, a charm, that if it had not power to "wile fish out of the water, and water out of a stone," might surely have won tolerance, if not admiration, from the most supercilious of English hearts. That the Thornleys could resist it, settled their place for ever in Anne's estimation.

CHAPTER IX.

"Dulce ridentem, misero quod omnes
Eripit sensus mihi, nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi nihil est super mî
[Quod loquar amens ;]
Lingua sid torpet, tenuis sub artus
Flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
Tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
Lumina nocte."

CATULLUS.

A RAINY autumn, and an unusually severe winter, when the mountain roads were almost impassable, excused Miss O'Flaherty from being in any haste to return the Thornleys' visit. The months of Mr. Daly's absence crept on, till yet another summer and winter were passed, and the third year of his absence was reached. Anne's letters from England began to be less frequent, and sometimes brought news that made her look grave as she read, even though she knew that Murdock Malachy, who was now permanently installed in her service, was studying her

face, and was resolved not to leave the room till he had received his share of news. Mrs. Daly, instead of growing stronger in her native air, had become a more confirmed invalid, and was constantly changing from place to place in search of the health and comfort that seemed to fly from her. Anne wondered whether it was the disappointment that so frequently follows the fulfilment of a long cherished wish that was making her life a burden to her. Connor, after twice running away from two different English schools, and narrowly escaping expulsion from a third, finally got his way and was entered at Trinity College, Dublin, whence Anne and Murdock too received gay letters, containing accounts of wild freaks and rhapsodies about new friendships, sometimes too, promises of speedy visits, which, however, never came off.

Occasionally, with the letter, came a newspaper adorned with verses in the poet's corner, signed, "Connor of the Double Sword." Anne sometimes laughed and sometimes cried over her first reading of these productions, but was never able to manage the second dispassionate perusal she intended. Somehow or other the newspaper, however carefully hidden away, was sure to vanish in the course of the morning, and did not return to her possession till the paper was in holes and the printing worn away by the numerous unfoldings and handlings it had undergone from

those to whom Murdock Malachy had not had the heart to deny the privilege of looking at Mr. Connor's "poetry and music wid their own eyes." There was, however, no danger of Anne's forgetting the words; they seemed after that to have got into the air, and to be always coming back to her borne on voices which, if they disfigured them as to accent, at least gave them emphasis enough.

Those were the years of O'Connell's trial and imprisonment, and the verses were of course patriotic, and such as did not lose any force by want of decision in the sympathies of the writer.

Pelham was reported to be quietly and creditably keeping his terms at Oxford, "and learning," Ellen's letters said, "to tolerate me better than he used to do. I rise in his estimation," she wrote, "when he brings any of his friends home, and finds that at sight of me they are not exactly shocked; and that even when I do perpetrate bulls and slip out an Irish phrase in an Irish accent, they think me worth talking to. Between ourselves, this same talking is often hard work for me. Pelham's friends are all cut out so exactly on the model of himself. I am obliged to run away every now and then to laugh by myself, they do make such a blushing and stammering over a few soft words; such as Darby O'Roone would have turned off his tongue as easily as he would have said good morning,

meaning as little by them. I get very tired of the talk, that I daren't put any spirit into, from fear of being misunderstood, but I bear it, for it brings a little kindness for me into Pelham's eyes, and pleases poor Mamma. Oh, Anne, I have quite made up my mind that those two will never approve of me—of my very self—out of their own hearts, so I try to be content with little bits of reflected favour when they catch sight of me in a light that is not bad in other people's eyes. Sometimes I am afraid it will almost make a hypocrite of me, I do strive so hard to make people I don't care for think well of me, that I may wear their good opinions like ornaments round me, and so look a little less despicable to those whose approval I covet so earnestly. It is very freezing work. You see Connor is generally away from home, and his letters give Mamma a bad headache, and Papa pockets them, his share and mine, too, to take them out of the way of comments, and carries them off to read over and over to himself or to his friends. Now I come to the worst of all my complaints. I hardly like to write it even to you, Anne. We see very little of Papa now, he hardly seems to belong to the house. There is nothing for him to do in the dull little houses, where we never stay long enough to get a home-like feeling. Of course he makes friends wherever we go, but I fancy somehow they are not the sort of people

he cares for Mamma and me to be intimate with, and Pelham looks down upon them, because you see they are generally Irish and poor, and I daresay rather queer, like you and me. I know they would suit me a great deal better than Pelham's friends. Sometimes when we are sitting prim in the drawing-room, and I hear a loud knock at the front door, I rush out and lean over the bannisters, just to catch the sound of voices that bring a whiff of home with them, or to hear a laugh or a joking word that has some heart in it. Then I peep and see Papa come out and slip his hand under some shabbily-coated arm and stroll out of the open door into the street, talking and laughing, and looking a little bit like his old self. How I long to follow him! I daresay they are going to some place that would not suit me, or he would let me come; but, oh! my whole soul goes out in longing for one free day—such a day as Connor and I used to have in plenty at home. An old man, with very ragged grey whiskers, and wisps of reddish hair round his bald head, who often comes, caught sight of me one day, and Papa made me come down, and said who I was. He is a doctor; his name is Lynch; and, Anne, I do believe he is a relation of Peter's. He said he lived close to Good People's Hollow in his early days, and that you were the light of his eyes and the jewel of his heart; he called me Miss Eileen, and

said I was like you. I could have thrown my arms round his neck and kissed him, and I believe I should if Pelham had not come out of his study just then, and stood on the landing swelling with disgust at it all. The house is very still and dead, when the front door closes behind Papa and his friends. I creep back to the drawing-room, feeling very guilty, and Mamma turns her sad eyes reproachfully on me, and I fancy she must be reading all the longings that are in my heart, and I hate myself vehemently for pining after things that used to pain her. So I go up and down. It is a very shadowy bit of road I am walking up now, and it is only now and then that I can get a far-off glimpse of light beyond. The now and then is generally on Sundays, when Mamma and I and Pelham go to church together. Pelham has decided, as Connor did when he went last year to Trinity College, to be confirmed in the English Church; and I am very glad, though it does put another barrier between them and Papa. I never might talk to you, Anne, about this one subject that we both care most about, but I will say now that I used to envy you dreadfully for going on Sundays where you could pray among the poor, and that I found it very difficult sometimes to feel right in our own church, where there were only a few respectable people, and the going there seemed chiefly a mark of distinction between Mamma and me, and our

neighbours. Here it is all different, and I am learning to understand what the teaching of our Church is, and that its chief merit does not consist in denying what other people believe: that is the one bit of light that has come to me here."

Mr. Daly's letters were even less satisfactory to Anne than Ellen's. There was a tone of recklessness and indifference about them that grieved her. He was clearly unhappy away from home, but he seemed to be sinking into a state of listless acquiescence in idleness and self-reproach, and as time went on spoke less and less frequently of the possibility of return.

With the view of rousing him, and tempting him back to his duties, Anne wrote constantly, dwelling not only on the unsatisfactory condition of the neighbourhood, where the effect of the first partial failure of the potato crop was being felt in wide-spread distress, but mentioning, without scruple, her conviction that Mr. Thornley had neither experience nor judgment to act judiciously in the circumstances that seemed likely to arise, and taking it on herself to repeat some of Murdock's and Peter's stories to his disadvantage. Sometimes Mr. Daly roused himself to inquire into particulars, and then followed references to Mr. Thornley himself, and such a sifting of evidence as made great havoc in Peter's statements, but generally failed to satisfy

Anne, who could not bear to give up her follower's veracity. The most important result of these controversies was the prevalence of an opinion spread far and wide about the country that Miss O'Flaherty was ready to uphold every-one, whatever their deserts might be, who "went agin" the Protestant English agent, and that to thwart or outrage him was a sure passport to protection from her. Anne began to be a little shocked and alarmed at the fervour of partizan enthusiasm that greeted her whenever, according to her wont, she and Peter Lynch made their appearance at the fairs and markets at which her people congregated. She tried to put down the groans and execrations of the Thornleys that alternated with blessings on herself; but Peter Lynch refused to second her, and her applauders told her to her face "To spare her swate breath, for they knew better than she did herself how it was wid her heart, and that black Protestants and nagurs were as hateful to her as to themselves."

Anne could not be surprised that she received more and more indignant letters from Sir Charles Pelham on behalf of his young relative; that Mr. Thornley proudly signified his determination to resign his appointment if any further report of his doings, from Miss O'Flaherty, were listened to by Mr. Daly; and that when once or twice in the course of the next summer she made an attempt at a peace-

making call of ceremony at Castle Daly, she was met at the door by a civil but decided "Not at home."

This rejection of civilities did not, however, put an entire stop to intercourse. As the anxious months passed on, there was an inevitable drawing together and increase of intimacy among all those whose business it was to take measures to alleviate the dire misery that was certain now to come. Anne O'Flaherty and the Thornleys met pretty frequently through the early autumn on public committees and at the houses of mutual acquaintances, where plans for the distribution of relief were being laid. They did not keep out of her way, and they did not seek her, and she could not but acknowledge that there was dignity in their bearing towards her, the dignity that comes of conscious right-doing.

The brother seemed to have grown thinner and paler since he came into the country, and the sister looked anxious. One day, after a meeting at the house of the Protestant clergyman at Ballyowen, when Anne, a comparative stranger to her hosts, was standing a little apart and not joining in the conversation, she overheard Miss Thornley complain to the clergyman's wife of the weary length of the hours when she sat alone in the evenings, watching for her brother's return home, and confess that *terribly* anxious thoughts would come when he chanced to

be a little later than usual. "It was not mere nervousness," she said. She had never found it hard to be alone in her life before, and she could not comfort herself by thinking that her terrors had any fancy or exaggeration in them—the danger was only too real. Threatening letters were placed about the premises, or thrust into the crevices of the doors and windows almost every night now; and she could not but think that the lonely road by which her brother returned from Ballyowen to Castle Daly was watched. The evenings were tolerably light still, but what would it be when the autumn closed in, with the winter to follow? She confessed she dreaded it.

Mr. Thornley here caught sight of Anne's horrified face, and made an imperious sign of silence to his sister. Anne pondered over that look and the comprehending glance Miss Thornley gave her brother back for long hours, as she drove home through the dark night by Peter Lynch's side, as safe in the loneliest part of the mountain road as by her own fireside. She understood quite well what the two looks meant. They thought her their enemy, through whose adverse influence the danger had grown up round them, and not for worlds would they let her have a glimpse of its effect on them, or abate a jot of their pride, by seeming to appeal to the compassion of one who misjudged them. There was plenty of spirit, ay, and of deep and

delicate feeling too, concealed by those grey masks of faces. Anne began not to like to think of the character in which she must figure in that anxious-eyed sister's thoughts. She did not sleep well that night, and when she came down in the morning, with her head full of the Thornleys still, she found a long letter of Ellen Daly's on the breakfast table, and seized upon it eagerly, hoping it would send her thoughts and interests comfortably into their usual channel. Before she had finished the first page she uttered an expression of surprise, which so alarmed Murdock Malachy, who was standing stock still in the middle of the room, with the toast-rack in his hands, watching her as she read, that she felt obliged to look up, and say, re-assuringly, "No, there is nothing amiss; they are all quite well, Murdock; but Miss Ellen has curiously enough made the acquaintance, at the sea-side place in England where they are living now, of a young sister of Mr. and Miss Thornley, and I am surprised at the description she gives of her."

"The thieves of the world, thim Thornleys," cried Murdock, dropping the toast-rack to scratch his head. "But it's a quare thing that they should be *iverywhere*. It'll be for no good, Miss O'Flaherty, dear, that another of the black-hearted brood have got round Miss Eileen where she is now. It'll be mischief they're schaming together, the two here and the one there of them."

"I wish I could hope that there was no mischief afoot but of Mr. and Miss Thornley's scheming," said Anne, severely; and fixing her eyes on Murdock's face, which changed a little, she added, "Can you tell me, Murdock, what has become of your uncle, Dennis Malachy, since he left the little place Mr. Daly put him into before he went away? Do you ever hear of him now? Is it true what you told me about his having quitted the neighbourhood for ever?"

"Do I know what has become of my uncle since the day whin, by Mr. Thornley's orders, the roof was taken off the bit of a cabin the master gave him, and he was left widout a place to put his foot in? It's that you're asking me?"

"Yes; I want to know. You told me once that he had gone to America."

"And why would not he have gone?"

"Only as we passed by Lac-na-Weel, last night, I thought I saw a light in the roofless cabin, and heard voices."

Murdock craned his neck over the table, so as almost to whisper in his mistress's ear—

"Maybe the boys were houlding a meetin' there; or maybe it was only one or two who had come together paceably to hear a bit of Mr. Connor's poetry read, and taste a dhrop of poteen that they had brought."

"Well, I hope you were not there yourself, Murdock,"

said Anne; "you know I don't allow my people to belong to secret societies."

"And right you are there," replied Murdock, stooping down to pick up the scattered pieces of toast with his fingers, and placing the toast-rack before his mistress with an ostentatiously meek expression of face that warned Anne of the uselessness of attempting to get further information out of him.

She turned back with a sigh to her letter, and read over again the passage that had provoked her exclamation.

"Did not someone say that the world must be quite a small place because everybody he met knew someone he knew? Have I expressed that properly without a bull? Well, I have had an instance of that sort of thing myself lately, and it has interested me so much that I must write it to you. First, let me tell you that I am much happier than when I last wrote in the spring, partly because Connor has come from Dublin to spend his vacation here, and partly on account of an acquaintance that has grown out of the adventure I am going to relate. You will say it is the oddest coincidence when you hear. Whitecliffe Bay, where we have been living for the last three months, is a very gay little place, especially in the autumn. There are miles and miles (Pelham would bring me down to yards, but I will indulge in amplitude of speech when I write to

you) of parade crowded with visitors, and below and beyond there is a region of wet white sand, broken up with big boulder stones and jutting-out ledges of rock. This is usually given up to regiments of nursemaids and digging children. Connor hates these haunts of Cockneydom, as he calls them, and in our walks hurries me at breathless speed through the populous district till we get beyond a certain rocky wall, where the beach is so solitary that we can almost fancy ourselves on our own shore again, and where he can make speeches to the stones, as he used to do at home. One day when we had had a great deal of poetry, and Connor had come out of his heroic into his ridiculous vein, he insisted on climbing up into a hollowed-out mass of rock and giving me a series of imitations of lectures by Dublin Professors. He said such absurd things, and made himself like so many different people, that I tired myself out with laughing. In a pause, we heard an echo of my laugh, stifled but very distinct, come from the other side of the stone. Connor jumped down like a shot, and almost fell over a young lady who was seated comfortably at the foot of his rostrum on the shady side with a large sketching-board on her lap. Her face grew as crimson as his when she saw we had found her out, and she looked up at me in an appealing way (I never saw such pretty brown eyes before), and said, 'Indeed I did not mean

to listen. I was busy sketching, and did not know what was going on for a long time, and afterwards I really could not help laughing.' Her mouth quivered again as she spoke, and she peeped up from under her curly dark eyelashes at Connor, as if she were very anxious to know what kind of creature all that rodomontade had come from. I was charmed, but Connor walked off, down, I could see, in the very lowest depth of glumness. 'It did not make it any better for him,' he said, 'that it was only a girl, and such a very pretty one, who had overheard his nonsense; he was all the more disgusted at being caught making a fool of himself.'

"We met the same young lady again afterwards on the sands, sometimes with a troop of children who seemed to be under her charge. Connor called her 'the girl with the shabby bonnet,' and I 'the girl with the pretty eyes.' She used to purse up her mouth and look demure as we passed, and I don't believe we should ever have spoken to her if it had not been for another little incident which these same children brought about. We came upon her one evening standing by the edge of the water, looking very angry and ready to cry. Two of the boys had perched themselves on a high white stone round which the tide had flowed. She wanted them to get down, and they were riotously daring her to come and make them. It was only

a narrow streak of water, but it would have spoiled her neat boots and her fresh muslin skirt to wade through it. It is true about the bonnet and all the other poor little clothes being shabby, but she manages to put them on with a dainty air that I could not give to silks and satins. I saw her glance down at her little feet and her pink flounces, and tears of vexation swelled up into her big brown eyes. I made Connor look. In a minute he strode over the water and was back again with a kicking boy under each arm. We walked back with her to the house where her aunt and uncle live, Connor keeping the boys in good order, and bringing them back to the height of good humour with such stories as only Connor can tell; and since that evening we three—or rather I should say we ten, for I must include the seven boisterous cousins—have been the fastest of fast friends. We did not find out who she was at first. The aunt's name was Maynard, and we called her Miss Lesbia—she has the misfortune to own that *sonnetical* name—and after a while Babette and Baby, as the boys call her. The fun is, that Pelham took a great disgust at our friendship. It is to be confessed that at first we talked about the Maynards night and day. 'Are they respectable people?' he asked. 'They don't keep a gig,' was all the satisfaction he could ever get from Connor. To satisfy himself, he used to come down to the Parade to watch us through an opera-glass as we

set out and came back from our boating excursions. He pronounced that Miss Maynard was not in the least pretty —quite plain, in fact, and in bad style—just the sort of friend he should have expected Connor and me to pick up and rave about. Yet though his judgment was so decided, one sight of her plainness did not content him. Somehow or other he was always there watching. Now there is this about our Babette—she has such a kind heart she can never bear to leave anybody out of her liking. She expects everyone to be friends with her, and I even think that the more people stand aloof from her the more interest they have for her, and the more resolute she is to win them. One day when we were all setting forth on a long expedition, and Pelham was lingering forlornly about, she just looked up at him with her large, babyish brown eyes, and said, 'You are coming too, are you not?' and he came. Not that once only. He has quite turned over a new leaf. He leaves his books in the morning, and sits out with us on the beach while Connor reads 'Lalla Rookh' aloud He joins our afternoon walks as a matter of course, and gets into the boat of an evening uninvited. Connor quizzes his shy, grave efforts to make himself agreeable, and Lesbia laughs; but Pelham, though he is not witty, can give a good hard, effective snub in self-defence now and then. When he administers one to Connor, it is like

putting a lid on to a jack-in-the-box. Connor is effaced for the moment, to flash up again at an unexpected opportunity, and Lesbia in a fright makes haste to twist the joke into something that sounds like a compliment to Pelham, and so restores peace. I am not sure that the boys are really learning to like each other better, but at all events we, sister and brothers, spend more of our time together, and have more things in common to talk about, than we ever had before in our lives; and, Anne, is it not odd that we should owe this to the sister of Uncle Charles's grand favourite, John Thornley—the man you dislike so much. It's true. Connor's Lesbia is actually sister to the brown-paper man and woman you described to me. I have been a long time coming to the fact, for it was very long in coming to me. I knew a great deal of Lesbia's history before her real name came out. It is a very sad history and fits the grave brother and sister you describe better than our pretty Lesbia. Their father, though he was a near relation of Uncle Charles, seems to have been a very imprudent man, and his conduct so offended his cousins, Dr. and Mrs. Maynard, that they dislike the very mention of his name, and acquiesce gladly in the mistake strangers naturally fall into of calling Lesbia Miss Maynard instead of Miss Thornley. There were several Thornley brothers and sisters at one time, but all are dead now except these three. I wish

Lesbia was not subject to be seized with fits of shyness whenever anything about the troubles they all had to bear in their father's lifetime comes out in the course of conversation; for it seems to me, from little words she has let drop now and then, that the grave brother and sister must have done some things that were rather fine, and I should like to hear more about them. They have had to work — actually work—with their own hands like common people to help the others in very bad times. Lesbia speaks of them with a kind of loving awe that impresses me greatly. It seems there is a rich old uncle on the mother's side, and when their mother died he offered to adopt his grand-nephews and nieces and take them to live with him if they would adopt his name and solemnly promise never to hold any further communication with their father, who was abroad at the time. There were four nearly grown-up brothers and sisters then, and Lesbia tells me they held a family council over the letter, and decided not to accept their grand-uncle's offer. They would not give up their father or their name, which they did not conside he had in any way disgraced, and they did not choose to be dependent on a relation who had allowed their mother to die in poverty. They agreed, however, that Lesbia, who was then only ten years old, ought not to be bound by their resolve, and they made a compromise about her. They

sent her here to live with their mother's cousin, Mrs. Maynard, and wrote to the grand-uncle begging him to wait for her determination till she was old enough to make it for herself. He never answered the letter, and he has not taken any special notice of Lesbia since, though he is on good terms with his relations here, and sends presents to their children sometimes. I think Lesbia almost hopes he has forgotten her existence. She dreads having a decision to make; she could not bear to separate herself from her brother and sister; and yet she acknowledges that luxury and riches would be great temptations to her. I can see they would, by the disgust with which she often looks at her own shabby bonnets and faded gowns. Why do I tell you all this? I am coming to the reason soon; but first I must explain the link between us and the Thornleys that sent them to Castle Daly. Uncle Charles was mixed up at one time in some of the speculations that brought the elder Mr. Thornley to grief; and it was the eldest son's conduct, when the father's difficult affairs came to be wound up, that inspired our wise uncle with such an opinion of his ability that he would not believe anyone could set our affairs to rights so well as he. I asked Lesbia one day if the appointment had been good for her brother, and to my surprise she shook her head and began to cry; and when Connor and I tried to comfort her by going into

raptures about the country, and telling her how we longed to live there again ourselves, she put a letter from her sister into my hands, and begged me to read it. It was a very clever letter, full of little touches of description that made me cry out with longing for home; but at the end came an allusion to some danger which she seems to believe hangs over her brother, and threatens his life. It was only a word or two, but they were such grave, quiet words, that I felt they meant more than they expressed. Anne, is this danger all a delusion, or is there a grain of truth in it? I will not believe in more than a grain, especially as Miss Thornley insinuates that you have used your influence to prejudice the people against her brother, and that you are to blame somehow for his not being safe at Castle Daly. I'll tell you what you must do to open her eyes. The instant you have finished reading my letter you must order out Peter Lynch and the car, and drive over to Castle Daly, whatever other business you may happen to have in hand, and invite the brother and sister to come and stay with you in Good People's Hollow. If they hesitate, you and Peter must bring them off by force. When you have possession of them you must take them about in the car to all the wakes and fairs and stations you can hear of, till their faces and yours and Peter Lynch's have got so mixed up together in people's thoughts that they will

never disconnect them again. Then you must write a letter for me to show Lesbia, such as will set her heart at rest, saying how well you and Mr. Thornley are getting on together, and how everybody's ill-will has given way at the sight of your triple alliance. Be quick, dear Cousin Anne, and accomplish this, or I'll never believe you are a true descendant of the O'Flaherty witch. I shall expect that letter before another month is over, and the shortening of the days which Miss Thornley says she dreads so much has become perceptible."

CHAPTER X.

Miss O'Flaherty went about her usual occupation for the rest of that day and the next, carrying Ellen Daly's letter in her pocket, and bearing on her mind the conviction that a disagreeable duty, to which she must bring herself sooner or later, hung over her head. It was not any personal feeling against the Thornleys that made Ellen's request distasteful, it was rather that it brought her, as despotic rulers are liable to be brought, into unexpected collision with the limits of her power.

Sympathetic people with active minds and not very strong wills sometimes appear to have almost unbounded power over those with whom they are brought constantly in contact. Their busy brains and hearts quick to interpret the emotions of slower intellects seem to have an irresistible faculty for moulding the actions of others in accordance with their wishes; but it is a sort of influence that is very apt to fail suddenly. It only gathers up and

gives form to the feelings and thoughts of others, it does not control them, and the link of sympathy once broken, the authority falls to the ground.

Miss O'Flaherty, Queen of Hearts, as she was reputed to be, had had one or two examples of her powerlessness to bring about what she desired, when it was *against* the prejudices of her neighbours she was working, and not *through* them, and she suspected that this matter of calling back the sanction she had been supposed to give to the popular hatred of the Thornleys would prove another humiliating instance of the failure of her influence.

She had no instinctive love of combat in her, but in this instance the duty was too imperative to be long put aside. She let two fine days slip by, but when the third came in, with drenching rain and howling west wind from the sea, her resolution woke up. It was easier to defy weather and Peter Lynch together than to take Peter Lynch alone, and from childhood Anne had always found a storm of wind inspiring, and taken delight in braving the weather; besides, she should be sure to find the Thornleys at home, and they hardly could turn her away from her cousin's door wet through. She gave her little maidens directions to prepare for visitors before she left home, and in spite of the blinding rain took the reins in her own hands to provide against Peter's circumventing her after all by

overturning the car in the first convenient bog he came near.

She did not set forth till noon, and her progress was slow, the road being converted in many places to a shallow running stream, and the old horse knowing well in whose hands he was. It was already late in the afternoon when Castle Daly came in sight. The storm had spent its strength by that time, the loud wail of the wind had died away into little fitful gusts, like the worn-out sobs of a child spent with angry crying, the clouds had lifted in the west, showing below their black jagged ridges a blood-red sun sloping to its funeral pyre piled with purple and gold. The tossed waves of the lake caught the glow, and ran up to the shores in crimson curves as if the expanse of water had been suddenly turned into a sea of molten jewels. The trees and battered flowers in the garden seemed to be gathering themselves together and lifting up their tossed arms and wet faces for a farewell kiss of peace from the departing sun. It looked like an hour of reconciliation. The battle had been fought, and the contending powers, storm and sunshine, were stretching hands to each other across the battle-field. Anne felt it a good omen, and took heart for the task that lay before her.

The place was very still and deserted, no loungers by *the gate,* no beggars airing their rags on the wall, or

gossoons hanging about the back premises waiting to be sent on errands. A dull, empty echo came back from the wide hall and staircase when Anne knocked. The maid that answered her summons informed her that Mr. Thornley was out, and Miss Thornley at home, but very busy. Anne did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence; she glided past the girl, walked straight to the library door, and opened it for herself. She had planned during her drive exactly what she would do and say on her arrival. She meant to walk in with outstretched hands, take Miss Thornley's in hers, and speak out at once all that was in her mind without false shame or grudging. She would confess frankly her repentance for past misconstructions, and speak of the strong desire that had grown up in her mind to undo the wrongs of which she was guilty towards them. There should be no holding back; the barriers of dislike and misunderstanding should be thrown down by a flood tide of generous impulse and goodwill. Her purpose held good till the door was thrown open, and she had taken a step or two forward into the room, and then a sudden revulsion of feeling came. A quiet figure rose from behind a writing-table, heaped up with books and papers, and two grey eyes fixed on her face, plainly asked the meaning of her intrusion. A snowball aimed at Anne would hardly have sent a more sudden chill through her

than the dignified surprise expressed by those eyes. The hearty words she had meditated died on her lips, and she gave up all intention of taking Miss Thornley's friendship by storm. There was an awkward pause which the English lady broke first, making a step forward, but not holding out her hand.

"I am afraid there is some mistake. You have no doubt come in to see my brother, Miss O'Flaherty, and I am sorry to say he is out. If I could be of any use—but—" (glancing expressively at her letters) "I am unfortunately very much occupied at this moment."

"Yes, I know, and I am sorry to intrude upon you," cried Anne, feeling that since she had lost courage to offer a favour, the only possible way of escaping from her dilemma was to beg one; "but I have had a long wet drive, and I am very tired. I think I must venture to ask you to let me sit with you an hour to rest."

Miss Thornley gave a despairing glance at her writing-table, then, with a resigned air, pushed it aside, brought forward an armchair for her visitor, and ringing the bell, ordered coffee and a fire. While these were in the course of preparation, she sat upright on her seat, and made conversation on indifferent topics with all her might. If she had drawn a circle round herself with an enchanter's wand, she could not more effectually have erected a barrier

against intimacy, which her guest was warned not to cross.

"I fear I am keeping you from finishing letters you are anxious about," Anne ventured to observe at last, noticing how, in the intervals of her little dry sentences, Miss Thornley's eye stole lovingly back to her writing-case.

"Not letters; I was copying out an essay of my brother's for the 'Quarterly Review,' which I had hoped to dispatch by to-day's post, as it is already due; but never mind, it is too late now; it can't be helped."

The tone was so much more interested than anything that had gone before, that Anne ventured to take up a MS. sheet and ask a few questions.

The essay proved to be a very laudatory review of a book on Ireland which Anne happened to have read, and particularly disliked. She could not refrain from stating some of her objections to the book in her usual eager way. Miss Thornley defended the author's opinions coldly at first; then with some force, turning to her brother's essay, and reading out bits of sarcasm with evident relish, which provoked angry eloquence from Anne. Argument, even when so vehement as almost to approach a quarrel, was a nearer step towards acquaintanceship for those two than mere company talk. Both parties forgot to whom they were speaking in the interest of the question, and put

forth all their powers. Miss Thornley's eyes brightened, her white teeth gleamed now and then with a smile of triumph when she pounced upon a very obvious contradiction in Anne's statements, a little colour stole into her brown cheeks. Suddenly, in some far-off region of the house, a clock struck. Anne saw all the interest and excitement die out of the grey eyes instantly, and a new expression steal into them—a yearning anxious look that went to her heart. They talked on, Miss Thornley sitting more and more upright on her high-backed chair, and wandering further and further from the point of discussion in her replies to Anne's remarks. Her whole soul had evidently gone out in striving to catch some distant sound. A quarter-of-an-hour—half-an-hour slipped by; silence fell upon the talkers; it was impossible to keep up the farce of conversation any longer.

Miss Thornley rose from her chair at last, and began to pace up and down before the windows, peering out into the darkness, first from one and then from the other; then, with a muttered excuse about the closeness of the room, raising a sash, and leaning her head out to listen. Was this her usual way of spending the twilight hours, Anne wondered. Her heart began to ache for her, as she observed how she kept nervously clasping and unclasping her fingers, as if every minute that passed made endurance

more difficult; and what a great start she gave when another hour struck.

"You will have a dark drive home," Miss Thornley observed to Anne, when it could no longer be denied that evening had come, and that they were sitting in the dark.

"I don't care, Peter can always drive safely; you will let me stay a little longer, till your brother comes back?" Anne implored.

Miss Thornley put out her hand and grasped the back of a chair, as if to keep herself from falling.

"You—you know of some danger he is in; you came to warn me?"

"Oh, no, no," cried Anne; "do you think I could have sat still, talking all this time, if it had been so? Please don't imagine me so heartless."

A quick gesture from Miss Thornley, that seemed to say the question of Anne's heartlessness was one to which she could not give her mind just then, was all the answer that came.

"There!" she said faintly, a minute or two later, "did you hear that?"

It was a very distant sound, so distant and faint that Anne would not have troubled herself to think what it was if her attention had not been called to it; but as it was, there was no resisting the conviction—that sharp,

clear ring—it was a gun going off somewhere, a few yards from the house. Anne could not keep her voice from trembling a little, as she answered—

"It was nothing; such sounds are often heard."

"No, not *such* sounds; I never heard anything exactly like that, at this hour, before. Will John never come?"

She covered her face with her hands, and stood trembling, but self-controlled still. Anne thought she could almost hear the beating of her heart in the dead silence that followed, while both held their breath, listening for what would come next.

Cheerful sounds—a man's brisk step crushing the gravel, a voice giving some directions outside, in what Anne believed to be a purposely loud and reassuring tone of voice, then a common-place knock at the door.

Miss Thornley withdrew her hands from her face, into which colour and expression had rushed back.

"There!" she said, looking up at Anne, "I have been foolish again, and you have seen it. May I beg you not to tell my brother about my little fright; it was nothing, you see, and I would not have him know how nervous I am apt to get, when he is long away, for the world; it would make him needlessly uncomfortable."

Anne had only time for a gesture of compliance, for the

brisk steps were approaching the library door, and Miss Thornley sprang forward to meet her brother.

"Well, John, are you very wet and tired?"

"Yes, wet through; but my pockets are well stuffed to make up for it. Three letters—one from Lesbia, and a better haul of books than I ever had before, from the Ballyowen book-shop. Actually, a 'Quarterly' only six months old; and a volume of Napier's 'Peninsular War.' Don't you call that worth riding in the rain for?"

The tones were light, but as the brother's and sister's eyes met there was an eager question in them that betrayed more feeling than comes into every-day meetings and partings.

"I have you safe at home again, and nothing has happened then?" the sister's eyes asked, while the brother's telegraphed back an affectionate remonstrance.

"Yes, you see I am safe. Why do you let yourself be anxious?"

The expression passed in a moment, as Mr. Thornley turned to address Anne; but it was not lost on her.

"I thought I heard a gun go off in the direction of the field beyond the larch grove, at the back of the house," Miss Thornley remarked in a studiedly indifferent tone of voice some minutes after.

"Ah! yes, I daresay you did," her brother answered; "some stupid fellows popping at the rabbits, I suppose."

"Shooting rabbits in the dark! and close to the road?"

"Well, I jumped over the stone wall and looked about in the wood, thinking I should surprise whoever it was, but I saw no one."

"Jumped over the wall! Oh, John, how rash! You promised you would not run risks."

"The risk of being mistaken for a rabbit? I assure you, Bride, it was not a risk; it was the best thing to do."

The pair of grey eyes met again, and looked into each other; there was an agony of questioning now in the sister's. What did he mean? Had he just come out of great peril? Had he had a hair-breadth escape of his life a few minutes ago, and did he know it himself? Anne could not quite make up her mind what to think. Her eyes, too, were rivetted on Mr. Thornley's face, and she fancied there was a little trembling of the lip as if he were trying to keep down some emotion before he spoke again.

"I really think that the poaching theory may be the true one to-night," he said. "Let us be satisfied with it, and ask no more questions. We shall never have a moment's peace here if we try to account for everything that happens on reasonable suppositions. Now, if Miss O'Flaherty

will excuse me, I will empty my pockets of books, and go and change my wet clothes."

It was clear that Anne could not delay her leave-taking longer. As she took Miss Thornley's hand to say "Good-bye," she managed to bring out the invitation that she intended to speak with her first greeting. It was negatived so decidedly by brother and sister in one breath, that she felt there was no possibility of urging it further. Her disappointment was less keen than it would have been an hour ago. The events of the evening had convinced her that the danger was too real and grave to be met by the measures Ellen had suggested. Another project had dawned on her mind. She was now in haste to return home, and spend the rest of the evening in taking the first step for carrying it into execution.

CHAPTER XI.

"The slow sweet hours that bring us all things good;
The slow sad hours that bring us all things ill
And all good things from evil."

TENNYSON.

THE library at Castle Daly, since the Thornley occupancy of the place had taken a more habitable look than when Mr. Daly only used it to yawn away an hour in on a rainy day. The rest of the wide empty house echoed footsteps drearily, and looked dismal; but cheerful sociability and home comfort seemed to have taken up their abode among the heaped-up bookshelves and well-laden writing and work tables with which the brother and sister surrounded themselves.

When the front door had closed behind Miss O'Flaherty, Bride Thornley employed herself in putting the few ordering touches to the room, needed to bring it to the perfection of cosyness her brother loved to see in the evening. She gathered up the scattered leaves of the MS. she had been

copying, and laid it ready for a last loving inspection; she arranged the books her brother was most likely to want, on his own particular table; she let down the heavy curtains over the windows, and wheeled two armchairs to their places opposite each other on the hearth-rug; then she sat down and stared at the fire. It was not often she let her thoughts fly back to old times, but to-night they flew back. She and her brother were in the habit of telling each other philosophically that to allow recollections of past sorrows and privations to rise up was a mere waste of mental strength, an infliction of purposeless pain; but to-night the painful images would arise, and she could not conjure them away. People thought her grave and reserved, and old-looking for her years; but had there been a time when she was young? She saw herself a pale, still child, gathering her younger brothers and sisters around her to hush their play and laughter, because she had discovered by her mother's swollen eyelids, and her father's knitted brow, that something had gone wrong with the elders of the house and that the sound of mirth jarred on them. She saw herself a thin brown-faced girl without any of the charms of girlhood, thrusting from her all timidity, all yearning after her mother's love and care, that she might go forth and work among strangers. She heard over again the bitter tales of privation, of "carking cares" and shames

which that young girl had to hear when she returned for short holidays to her home. She saw herself kneeling by her dying mother's bedside, straining to catch the last feeble injunctions that fell from her parched death-drawn lips—not concerning herself—hardly a farewell to herself. She had been held to be capable of struggling alone in the world for so long, that there was no need for anxiety about her; it was the younger, more loveable ones, that claimed even those last thoughts. A little rosy face—a golden head—lay nestled against the mother's cheek; towards that her dying eyes were turned. "Child, be mother to this child!" And then the tired soul had escaped from the worn-out body, and the burden under which the elder woman had sunk fell on the girl's shoulders. It had been heavy in the long years that had followed. Unbearable she told herself it would have been, but for the help that came, when she discovered that there was one among her young charges able to take part with her in carrying the load; one whose determination to work and struggle, and suffer, rather than sink, matched her own; one from whom a word of counsel could be obtained now and again; one who could be trusted, in small things and great, not to fail. Bride traced in thought the steps by which she and this young brother had changed positions towards each other, till, from his looking up to her, she had learned to rely and lean upon him.

What a rest it had been! What a tower of strength he had proved to be, when the stress of the storm came! And when the worst was over—yes, perhaps there was a time when she had felt young, like other people, with energy to spare, and that strange bubbling up of eager thoughts and bright hopes in the heart that leads to purposeless talk, and pleasure in mere motion and life such as kittens and puppies seem to have. She had known it during that one year when she and John had kept house together in London before death had invaded the brother and sister band. A very straitened household it had been, and the struggle to keep it together hard for the two young heads, but they had all been gay together. Bride thought she could not then have been such a very formal, cold, repulsive person as Miss O'Flaherty seemed to find her now. Perhaps in that far back time, when there had been younger sisters to care for her looks and sew bows on her dresses, and arrange her soft, silky brown hair in becoming fashion round her head, there might—if she had not always been too busy—if she had gone out into the world and made acquaintances as other girls did—there might have been a possibility of her having been loved—of her having had some story of her own, some insight into the great mystery that seemed to fill up so large a space in other people's lives. Strange thought to flash across her, now that youth and the possi-

bility lay so far behind! Well, if no love of the usual kind had come in that one sunny strip of life, that one breathing space between crushing anxieties and heartrending bereavements, something else had come—something that Bride Thornley was well content should stand for her in the place of what is usually called love. It was then that she and John had found each other out. Heart and conscience had been proved before, but it was in that leisure that their close mental companionship had begun—then they had first tasted what keen pleasure interchange of thought between minds that stimulate and satisfy each other can give. What talks they used to have in their quiet evenings after days of hard work, when, from the dingy, London lodging-house parlour, their minds took bold flights into realms of speculation and fancy, which seemed their own by divine right, because they were most at home there. What lovely dream-pictures rose up; what sparkles of wit flashed out; how eloquent, how wise, and how brilliant they were for each other!

The first eagerness with which their studies were prosecuted might have faded somewhat, the talks grown less eloquent, with the discovery that mysteries are not to be solved by dint of discussion; but the old comradeship was as close and sweet as ever still, the salt of life to each.

Whatever John Thornley might be to other people, to his sister Bride he was the sunshine and glory, the very fountain of joy of her life. Could she bear ever to lose him, or even to share possession of him with anyone else? Had not his grave face an extra attraction for her, because she thought that to no other eyes but her own would it ever look beautiful?

There did not appear to be any special reason for asking herself that question to-night, but it came and absorbed Bride so completely that she did not observe, as she might otherwise have done, that her brother was absent a long time from the room, or that when he did return, and came and stood by the fire, there was an expression of suppressed excitement on his face, which it had not worn half-an-hour before. It was he who broke the silence at last.

"Bride, I have something to tell you."

She looked up with a start and an exclamation of dismay. "Ah, I knew there was something—that gun!—Go on, I'm ready."

"No, no. Put such fancies quite out of your head. I have told you really all I know of that matter. This is something far more important. It concerns ourselves entirely."

"Good, or bad?"

"I don't quite know which you will think it."

"Bad, then, if it means change; we have had a fairly happy time lately, and, according to past experience trouble is due. What quarter can it come from? White cliff Bay and Babette, I guess. She has quarrelled with Mrs. Maynard, or perhaps in a fit of desperation over the eternal stocking-darning she has rushed into some silly flirtation, or engaged herself imprudently, and they want you to interfere."

"Quite wrong; what could make you think of such a thing? It's odd how even the sensiblest woman's thoughts always fly off to love-making."

"Indeed, John, it was not quite a vague guess; if you had read Babette's late letters as attentively as I read them, you would have noticed the hints that gave my thoughts that impulse."

"Hints as to growing weariness of stocking-darning or dawning love,—which?"

"I think I detect a combination of both states of feeling."

"Hum; we may have to inquire into that by and bye; but the news of to-night, which I have just read in one of those letters I brought in my pocket from Ballyowen, concerns a very different matter from marriages or giving in marriage. Bride, our grand-uncle, John Maynard, is *dead.*"

"Dead! Well, I suppose he was a great age; where did he die? Had he any friend near him?"

"I don't know about a friend. His lawyer James Clarke was with him. The old man sent for him to Florence when he was taken ill, and he stayed till after the funeral. It is he who writes to me about the will."

"Well, well, John, you know what I want to ask. How is it after all? Has he died rich or poor? Has he divided his money fairly among all his dutiful, expectant relations excepting our twoselves, or has he left it all to a hospital?"

"He has left a very large fortune indeed; much larger than anyone expected I fancy, and he has not divided it. With the exception of a few small legacies, it all goes to one person."

"And the lawyer has written about it to you—to *you*, John?" A vivid colour flashed into Bride's face; she rose from her chair and held out her hands to her brother. He crossed the hearth and took both in a firm clasp.

"No, Bride, that thought must go out of your head at once. I am not the heir. It concerns us nearly though."

"Then it is Lesbia."

"Yes, it is little Lesbia. Old John Maynard has left

the bulk of his great fortune to her—the child—our child is a great heiress now; that's the news that has come to-night."

"I can't take it in—baby—our poor little Babette."

"Rich little Babette, you mean. She need never break her heart over a stocking-basket again; as to the incipient love-making, that will have to be looked after perhaps."

"How will she feel about it when she hears—Babette a great heiress! I always thought the old man would reward us for sending her away by remembering her in his will, but that he should pass over so many other relations equally near and single her out to inherit all his fortune is different from what I expected."

"Our mother was his favourite niece till she married. I fancy he always secretly intended to make her children his heirs, and as we cut ourselves off, there was only Lesbia."

"How I should like to be near her and see her face when she is told. It is seven years since we have seen her. Oh, John, does not this, at all events, end her banishment? Shall we not have her with us now?"

"Of course. This will please you. You and I are left sole guardians. A proof that, however angry the old man professed to be, he respected our conduct at the bottom. He has left us each a legacy of four thousand pounds, and

we are to have four hundred a year for looking after the young lady and her property till she marries."

"A salary for taking care of our own little sister, whom we have provided for since she was five years old! Can we bear that, John?"

"I suppose it soothed the old man at the last to do us so much of justice without altogether revoking his threat. We must take it as he intended it."

"But how about the other relations—the Joseph Maynards?"

"They have a legacy equal to ours."

"And the bulk of the old man's rich hoards goes to Lesbia! How strange it will be to the Joseph Maynards to see her set up on such a pinnacle of prosperity—the little cinder-girl of their house this seven years. I am afraid they will be very angry."

"They won't like it; but they have no more right to grumble than you or I, except that they have been kept longer in suspense. Old John made all his money himself, and had a right to do what he pleased with it."

"If it had pleased him to spend some of it in helping us when we needed help sorely, what grateful hearts he might have had round his death-bed!"

"Let that thought rest now he has gone."

"It shall. I don't suppose, though, that Mrs. Joseph

Maynard will be as silent over the wrongs of her precious boys. Lesbia will not have much comfort after the news of her fortune reaches Whitecliff."

"We will send for her as soon as possible."

"How strange it will be to have her again, a girl of seventeen and an heiress, instead of the little clinging thing I used to dress, and coddle and teach, and work my fingers to the bone for! I hope she is not much changed. John, do you remember the night we resolved to separate ourselves from her seven years ago? how my heart ached!"

"Yes, it troubled you more to part from Lesbia than to give up your chance of inheriting the great Maynard fortune."

"We elder ones had no choice. We could not promise to disown our father, or not to go back to him if he wanted us, and we could not foresee he never would. I think we had only two or three letters from him during the next six months, and then we heard of his death in Canada. The decision could not be recalled then."

"Why, you have never wished to recall it; have you?"

"Not till to-night; to-night I think it does give me pain to remember that, if things had fallen out ever so little differently, this great fortune would have come to you."

"The 'falling out' would have had to be very different

for this money to come to you or me as we are now. Think what mean reptiles we should have grown into by this time if we had been depending on that despotic old man all these years. Lesbia has, at all events, got the fortune without having had to serve an apprenticeship of servility to earn it."

"Yes, but if the thought that made my heart beat so quickly just now had proved a correct guess: if he had, as I hoped just then, relented and done you full justice at the last."

"It would have been a bad precedent. It's best to know that, if one makes a choice, one must expect to abide by it, and that one can't turn one's back on an object and reach it by walking the opposite way."

"You would have been in your right place."

"Perhaps; but don't be covetous, madam. I believe that if I had had the money I should have done something with it you would not have greatly approved."

"I can't imagine not approving of what you did."

"I should have bought this house and estate of Mr. Daly—he'll have to sell it sooner or later—and settled down into an Irish landlord."

"To be shot dead from behind a stone wall three months after. I would not have let you."

"Yes, you would; you as well as I have a spice of the

obstinate temper that helped old Uncle John to make his fortune. You don't like any more than I to be baffled in an undertaking you have once put your hands to."

"You have cured me of ever grudging Lesbia her fortune again. As it is, we can hardly keep her here. You will have to give up the agency. Did not you say we had each four thousand pounds? Why that is enormous riches. It sets you free at last to devote your whole time to study and such literary work as you really care for."

"Time will settle all that. What we have to do at once is to write to Babette and the Joseph Maynards. I should like the child to receive the news from us first; if it comes to her through Mrs. Joseph it will be spiced with bitter comments."

"The little thing has not had a brilliantly happy home with our good cousins, I fear. She has been very good to complain so little; and now to think of having her again for our own. She must have grown up very pretty. Do you remember the dimples in her cheeks, John, and her beautiful big brown eyes?"

"I suppose she was a pretty child, but I don't think I liked her eyes as well as I like some other eyes in the family; yours, for example, Bride, always seem to me to have a great deal more in them."

"Mine?" A personal compliment was such a strange thing to Bride Thornley, that coming even from her brother, it brought a vivid blush to her face. "My pale grey things! You don't know what you are talking about, John; you have no appreciation for beauty."

"Yes, I have, but it does not oblige me to like sparkling glass beads stuck in a face. I know quite well what I do admire."

"Do you, really?"

"Yes, that I do, really."

"You are laughing, John."

"At the terror I have put you into with that word. In one instant of time you conjured up the notion that I was preparing to tell you of some long-concealed attachment, by way of winding up the surprises of the evening. Did not I say truly that your feminine thoughts were always flying off to match-making?"

"It is wise of me to keep myself prepared. It must come some time, and if I never think of it I shall not be ready."

"I don't see what preparation you would need for such a communication if I were ever in a condition to make it."

"Of course you don't, you matter-of-fact*est* man."

"Don't you profess also to be a matter-of-fact*est* woman?"

"Yes, but the gulf there is between man and woman in such a matter as this!"

"The gulf is created simply by your womanly unreasonableness in supposing that the new feeling, if it ever does come, must necessarily be so absorbing as to blot out old ones. It would not with me. Make yourself easy on that score, Bride; I cannot imagine such a thing of myself. If I ever do fall in love, I shall look out for having the same calm, satisfying, equal-minded comradeship with my wife that you and I have had together. I have thought it well over, and that is my highest ideal of human attachment. And that is what I mean to go in for."

"No, you won't. I am not at all pleased to hear you say so. I think it a very bad sign that you have formed the plan."

"I have formed no plan; it is you who are planning. I think we do very well as we are, and that nothing can be more uncalled for than your drilling yourself to expect changes. It would be ridiculous for you and me to talk sentiment to each other; but if you are in no haste to dissolve our old partnership, I am not—it satisfies me."

"John, that is as good as a fortune to me; I am richer now than Babette."

Their manners were habitually so reserved, and it was so seldom that personal feelings were discussed between

them, that Bride felt those few words a possession to be laid by in her memory and often looked at, especially when after a moment's grave silence her brother stooped down and put his lips to her forehead. It seemed to her to be a seal on the old bond of fellowship, given on this day when new conditions were about to enter into their lives.

"Now let us have tea, and write the letters that are to transform Cinderella into the Princess," said John.

"They will only invest her with her silk robes and her chariot and glass slippers," Bride answered. "The Prince is another question, and for my part I hope he will be a long time in coming."

"We must not however take measures to keep him away, or we shall lay ourselves open to the imputation of manœuvring to keep our own four hundred a year."

"As if anyone in their senses would suspect you of interested motives."

"Heiress-hunters will be very apt to do so if I interfere with their game, I suspect. The child will be a more anxious charge for the future, than when——"

"You lifted her sobbing from the bed where our mother lay dead, John. It shall be very tender care we take, shall it not, of herself, not of her fortune, with as little thwarting as may be of any true feeling that comes? I should not like hers to be a colourless life."

"A colourless life is not by any means the worst fate that can befall a woman. We have witnessed one far more cruel, and our earnest care must be that Lesbia's life shall in no degree repeat that. Our poor mother was an expectant heiress in her youth, you remember; and I heard her say that she owed all her unhappiness to her having had the prospect of these same Maynard hoards hanging so long over her head. Our father would have been a different man but for the thought of them."

"Yes, yes, I know. But we will be the wisest providences over Lesbia. She shall not have a chance of making a mistake in her marriage; but don't let us attempt to forecast her future till our letters are written, or I am certain we shall not make them encouraging enough. I want the news to come to her sweet and bright."

The spirits of the two guardians rose as they wrote, and Bride was so well satisfied with the letters she sealed and directed at the close of the evening that for the first time since her residence at Castle Daly she ran down to the lodge-gate with the letter-bag to deposit the precious budget in the postman's hands herself, and to administer a not unnecessary admonition to him to make a point of reaching Ballyowen that morning in time to catch the mail. The man of course pulled up his horse to enter into a long and vociferous defence of his own punctuality,

and in the vehemence of his gesticulations threw down a bag, which being imperfectly fastened, emptied its contents on to the road. Bride stooped to gather up the letters, and as she returned them to their place could not help seeing that the direction of one was to the same little seaside town in England for which her own letters were destined. She crossed her arms on the upper bar of the gate when at last the carman had been prevailed on to start again, and watched him drive up the steep white road whipping and shouting to his horses with a great display of energy, while the children from the mud cabins on the mountain-side rushed down, and threw themselves full in his way, whooping and huzzaing and waving ragged caps and sticks, till Bride thought it a wonder that car, horse, driver, and letter-bags were not precipitated over the rocky ledge into the dancing waters below. She stayed looking up the road till the car had rounded the summit of the hill, and the last urchin crept back to his mud retreat, her thoughts following the queer-looking messenger who was bearing on the first stage of its journey the news that was to make such a revolution in one little life. She wished she could somehow conjure herself within the folds of her letter and creep out when it reached its destination at last at the other side of the kingdom, to add some words tenderer and graver yet than any that had come to

her the evening before. Her head bowed itself at last on her clasped hands, and purple mountains and shimmering lake, and shouting children passed out of her vision as her heart rose in yearning prayer to Him whose felt presence with all annihilates distance, giving into His hands the task of delivering from unsafe elation the eager little heart that had to learn that the new strange temptation of a "time of wealth" was coming upon her.

Anne O'Flaherty's thoughts took flight in the same direction many times that day. The letter whose direction Bride had read was hers. She had written it off impulsively on her arrival home the night before, and not allowed herself to re-read it in the morning. It was full of the impression her visit to the Thornleys had made on her. Not mitigating anything of her fears, or scrupling to urge strongly on Mr. Daly the motive for a speedy return to Ireland, which she knew would be most powerful with him, the duty of not allowing another man to run risks for his sake which he was not sharing.

She was anxious and unsettled all the day after her letter went. She did not exactly regret having written it, but the cooler judgment of the morning showed her it was an important step she had taken, and that the reading of her letter would certainly make a change in the lives of those she most cared for. Would they have cause to

thank or reproach her for it by and bye? Would Mrs. Daly ever forgive her for bringing her husband back to Ireland just then?

There was however no use in questioning or regretting. Bearers of good news and bad had passed out of their writers' control now, and through the bright sunshine and the dark night, and the dawn of another day, were speeding over the sea, by quiet country roads, through noisy towns and pleasant English villages, to meet the eyes and hands that would never afterwards forget the feeling of those particular sheets of paper between their fingers, the position and shape of the words on which their startled glances fell.

CHAPTER XII.

My purse holds no red gold, no coin of the silver white;
No herds are mine to drive through the long twilight;
But the pretty girl that would take me, all bare though I be and lone,
Oh! I'd take her with me kindly to the county Tyrone.

Irish Ballad.

A SHARP shower was falling, turning the badly-paved streets of the little seaside village of Whitecliff into a succession of gutters and puddles, and driving the early promenaders and the troops of children, mammas, and nursemaids on their way to their morning bath in the sea, to beat hasty retreats into the green verandahed houses that stretched in irregular rows along the cliff. In ten minutes the busy little place looked deserted, and discontented loungers at the windows had nothing to regale their eyes upon but the rain-drops splashing in the gutters and the occasional advent of a dripping umbrella, or a woman with a basket of shrimps on her head. Pelham Daly had been standing for nearly three-quarters of an hour in the

window of one of these houses, lazily swinging the tassel of the window-blind backwards and forwards, and contemplating that pleasant prospect in no very contented frame of mind. Ellen had accused him playfully of being always out of humour when it rained, and Connor had made a calculation of how many sulky days he might reckon on having in a year, if he spent his life at Castle Daly, and he had not taken their remarks in very good part. He thought within himself that he had very special reasons for being disgusted at the turn the weather had taken in this last week of his College vacation, but he could not make out a very satisfactory account of these reasons to his own mind in the course of his meditations at the window. Of course it was of no consequence whatever to him, whether that picnic to the pirate's cave, planned with the Maynards, came off while he was at Whitecliff or after he had left. He had only consented to join it out of good-nature, and that there might be some one of the party capable of taking reasonable care of Ellen; and yet—and yet—"Yes, certainly," he thought, "it was towards him, and not towards Connor, that a certain pair of brown eyes had glanced when, on parting for the night at the Maynards' garden gate, the words 'We shall meet to-morrow' had been spoken softly. The swinging tassel, the square window-frame, the dripping pavement

vanished altogether from Pelham's vision for a few minutes while the momentous question of the exact direction of that glance occupied his thoughts—in their place came a little pink and brown face set in smooth bands of soft dusky hair, and two bright eyes, flashing quick glances, whose meaning required a good deal of afterthought. Not that he cared or was ever likely to care seriously what the glances meant, only it was tantalizing never fairly to know whether one was looked at or not. All at once, in a second, his eyes recovered the power of seeing what was before them—the dream-picture faded and reality came in its place, vividly, startlingly, sending quick pulses through all his veins as he gazed. The back-door of a house just opposite, but divided from the street by a narrow strip of garden, opened, and a child of four trotted forth into the rain. The slim figure of a girl dashed out after him and caught him by the skirts to drag him in. Floating pink flounces, a white handkerchief thrown over a dark head, little feet in thin slippers showing on the wet step, slender hands stretched out,—that was the spectacle Pelham's eyes fastened upon and recognized in a moment. A small contest followed. The little child struggled hard to escape from the arms that captured him. A sturdy hand directed a blow at the pink cheek, shaded by the handkerchief. Pelham clutched the window-frame with a wild purpose

of flinging himself out, across the dividing space on to the scene of action. Then all was over; the figures retreated as suddenly as they had appeared, and no evidence of the incident remained but the deep glow that had burned itself into Pelham's face, and the quick beating of his heart that had been so quiet a minute before.

It was no concern of his, certainly, he said to himself; he was going away to-morrow and should never see any of these people again; but if any excuse for thrashing every one of those cubs of Maynards could be afforded him before he took his departure, he should leave the place with an easier mind. How could Ellen and Connor witness such a state of things as indifferently as they did? How could they laugh gaily over the incongruities of their friend's surroundings, and see only subjects for amusement in the little indignities which made him, who had no pretence to her friendship, indignant and heartsore? He recalled warm words and beaming looks bestowed one hour, which did not preclude little jokes at pretty Lesbia's expense the next, and he said to himself that such hypocrisy made him sick. Poor bright-eyed, ill-used, trusting Lesbia! whom he was leaving to-morrow to the mercies of exacting relations and half-hearted friends. *He* leaving! What was he thinking of? As if he had anything to do with her, or she would ever even know that there was one

person in the world who resented her wrongs as they deserved to be resented!

"There!" cried Connor, looking up from the desk where he had been writing diligently for the last quarter of an hour. "I have done it, Ellen, and not so badly either, I will say that for myself. I doubt whether there are many fellows, this side the Channel at all events, who could have turned off a 'nate' little copy of verses, as sweet as sugar, by Jove—in the time, exactly twelve minutes and a half by the clock."

The silence, which had actually lasted nearly half an hour, here came to an end, and the clack of tongues that hardly ever ceased in Ellen's and Connor's waking hours when they were together, began again.

"Verses, Connor? I thought you said you were going to read mathematics soberly this rainy morning?"

"What can a poor fellow do, when a young lady with the cunningest eyes in the world comes round him by moonlight, saying how 'mavourneen' is the prettiest word ever spoken, and would not it go well in a song? How can he help himself writing a song about her the first thing in the morning?"

"Oh Connor, Connor, it was you who began with your 'mavourneens'—I heard you. But let us see what you have written."

"Yes, yes; read it aloud. I flatter myself that there's a touch of the real thing in the verses, and that they'll turn off your tongue like music. Try them."

"Mavourneen is a priceless gem,
Jewelled her robe from throat to hem,
She's crowned with a rare diadem,
Mavourneen.

"Her throne is pure gold, but not fit
For one so strangely fair, to sit
Upon, and yet she honours it—
Mavourneen.

"Slaves every moment throng her feet,
With eager eyes upraised to meet
Each least desire of hers, most sweet
Mavourneen.

"But, oh, she wears the plainest gown,
Her dear head never crowned a crown,
Only my heart makes her renown—
Mavourneen.

"And her gold throne I spoke about,
Is only built of love without
Any possible flaw throughout—
Mavourneen.

"My thoughts are born in chains, they move
All round and round her in one groove,
Living to wait on her I love—
Mavourneen."

"But it's an out-and-out love song," cried Ellen, when she had finished reading.

"And what else would it be? What else is worth putting into music and giving her to read but just love?"

"I don't know what Lesbia will think of it though—this line about the poorest gown—it's very pretty, but will she like it?"

"I can't take it out; it's just that gives the touch of pathos and makes the verses above the common. It's the one grain of real poetry in the whole thing, for it came warm and true out of my heart. I was thinking of her as she looked last night, when that little rascal, Bob Maynard, threw a handful of wet sand over her dress. She stood still, looking at the stains, with her red lip up, and the big tears swelling in her jewels of eyes—the poor little darling of the world, that she is! Mavourneen!"

"Oh Connor, Connor, I do believe you will talk yourself into being actually in love with her at last, and you know in reality it's all make-believe and talk—words, words, words."

"I know nothing of the kind; how can you judge? Every man meets his fate some time."

"Man! But you are a boy."

"And Babette is a baby; so we are well matched. Come, give me an envelope. I don't say that I have quite the brass to give her these verses into her own hands. I'll send them anonymously by post, and she can make out whom they come from if she pleases."

"You won't, really?"

"Who's to hinder me?"

"I will. I won't allow any such nonsense to go out of the house. I won't have you make such a fool of yourself," cried Pelham, turning from the window with a very red, indignant face, which during all the previous conversation he had been trying to bring into sufficient order to expose to Connor's quizzing eyes.

"Hollo! Don Pomposo Furioso! we had forgotten you were in the room," cried Connor. "You would not have had the luck to hear my verses, I can tell you, if I had remembered your existence five minutes ago; but, since you have heard, what objection does your wisdom find to them?"

"Give the letter to me; it shan't go. As I said before, I won't let you make a confounded fool of yourself, and insult Miss Maynard."

"Insult Miss Maynard! That's a good joke, when she asked me to write the verses herself, and is expecting them this minute—the darling!"

"Ellen, you can let him speak in that way of your friend?"

"My dear Pelham, I don't see anything to be so very angry about. Connor drew her on certainly, but Lesbia did drop a hint about wishing to have some verses written on purpose for herself—I heard it."

"Well, I have often been told that women are envious of each other, and speak ill of their dearest friends behind their backs, and now I believe it."

"Easy, Pelham, easy. Abuse me as much as you like, and welcome—I'll take it kindly; but don't fall foul of Ellen, if you please. The notion of her needing to be envious and jealous of little Lesbia Maynard beats everything for absurdity."

"You say that, and you write verses about gold thrones and chains. What a confounded humbug you are!"

Connor laughed aloud. "Well, no one will accuse you of being that same. You've as fine a talent for insulting your relations and friends as the biggest hypocrite in the world would need to prove his sincerity by."

"I did not insult you—nothing of the kind; but I'm in earnest that those verses don't go to Miss Maynard."

"Oh, I can be in earnest too, if you like; but just look here, Pelham! We are not schoolboys now to quarrel conveniently, and we found out once before that it did not answer for us two to interfere with each other. We made a mess of it when it was only a question of a dog between us, and a young lady is a much more awkward subject to disagree about."

"And indeed, Pelham, you are taking it a great deal too seriously," put in Ellen, eagerly. "Don't you know that

Connor is always writing verses to young ladies, and never sending them? Why he has written poems on every one of the seven Miss O'Roones of Ballyowen; and as to the Dublin young ladies of his acquaintance, you should see what he finds to say and sing about them."

"No, he shall not see," cried Connor, taking up his writing-case, and deliberately placing the sheet from which Ellen had read in an inside pocket already well stuffed with MSS. "It's like shaking a red rag before a mad bull's eyes to show a scrap of poetry to Pelham. Let him subside, poor fellow; we've poked him up enough for one day, and he begins to look dangerous. Hullo! there's the postman coming up the street. I shall run down and intercept my share of his budget. I always hate letters except on a rainy day, and then there's some use in them. If I find a *billet-doux* from the youngest Miss O'Roone, Pelham shan't read it."

Pelham followed Connor out of the room, and was seen by Ellen a few minutes later setting forth to work off his discontent by a solitary walk in the rain. As soon as he was fairly out of sight, Connor's figure dashed across the road in the direction of the Maynards' house, closely following in the wake of the postman. Ellen, left alone, returned with a sigh to her work of spreading delicate fronds of seaweed on wet paper to send to cousin Anne,

as an addition to the Happy-go-Lucky Lodge collection of works of art. As her needle laboriously separated and arranged the minute pink and white fibres, her thoughts made rapid excursions from one subject to another. If only the boys would not quarrel; if only she could once more see cousin Anne, and help her to arrange her heterogeneous possessions; if only she could learn the secret art by which Lesbia kept the boys so pleasantly engrossed that in her presence such jars as had occurred this morning seldom fell out. She laughed over the foolish squabbles with Connor, but they always left a little sting, a pin-prick wound, in her heart, that made her uneasy and remorseful for days after; and though no amount of coaxing would have won such an avowal from Connor, she knew quite well that it was the same with him. It was as necessary for him as for herself to bask in the good-will and approbation of those he lived among, and she knew by many little signs that nothing ever elated Connor more, or made him more comfortable with himself, than when some rare chance brought an unusual mark of confidence, or a word that could be twisted into approval from Pelham, his way. And Pelham, too, why did he wince so under Connor's little sarcasm and her own careless speeches, and brood over them so long, if he did not, at the bottom of his heart, care more for Connor's good opinion and hers than

he ever chose to show? Surely she must be a very bad manager, a very inefficient sister, not to have brought about greater harmony between these two, and made them understand each other better before this. How the rain pattered down, and how still the house was within! Soon Ellen heard her father open the dining-room door, and take in the letters which Connor had left on the hall-table, and shut himself in to read them; five minutes after, the door of the lower room opened hurriedly and her father's voice was heard calling her mother to come downstairs. It was not a usual thing for Mrs. Daly to leave her bedroom in the morning. How feeble her step on the stair was now, how slowly and reluctantly she seemed to move! Ellen half rose to help her, and then sat down again. If her father had any unpleasant business to discuss with her mother, as was only too likely, it was better that they should talk it out first alone, and she must hold herself ready to comfort each separately afterwards. In dilemmas her father was apt to turn to her for counsel instead of to Pelham, and that displeased her mother. There was something in the aspect of this day that reminded Ellen of another day at home, a day that had brought trouble and change. Was it the patter of the rain? Strong, heavy rain, that would not have disgraced the West land, where everything seemed to be done more thoroughly and heartily

than here. Ellen shut her eyes and tried to conjure herself back in thought to Castle Daly, and to believe for a moment or two that when she looked up she should find herself surrounded by old familiar things. The touch of a wet cheek put close to hers roused her, and she opened her eyes quickly to the sight of Connor leaning over the back of her chair, with laughter in his eyes, and bright raindrops trickling from his drenched hair down upon her face.

"What are you thinking of?" he began. "Have you not been cracking your sides with laughter over the fine disclosure we have had this morning?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don Pomposo in love."

"Oh, nonsense. Why did you go out into the rain and get yourself so wet?"

"What a question for a Connemara girl! To post my love-letter, of course."

"Oh, Connor, have you really?"

"And indeed I have. The joke is, that I had to take one of Pelham's envelopes, with his initials on the flap. I dashed into his room, seized from his desk the first that came to hand, directed it to Miss Lesbia, and rushed out after the postman to drop it into the Maynards' box with their other letters. I only noticed the big P.D. above the

seal after it had slipped through my fingers. But it's an excellent joke."

"It is not fair: she will think Pelham wrote the verses."

"Will she? Won't her heart tell her better than that don't you think?"

"Connor, I do believe you are very conceited."

"You'll have to believe her very stupid if she is to give Pelham the credit for writing what she's reading this minute. I wish I could see her eyes, the darling jewels that they are, eating up the words. Won't she know who wrote them! Pelham write such verses as those to her, indeed!"

"Perhaps she would prefer to think they were Pelham's. She has seen almost as much of him as of you; and he is very handsome, you must allow."

"So is that old gold fish in the vase there, but who ever succeeded in getting up a tender interest in the dumb beauty? It looks well in a room, but nobody flings a thought to it. It's the blarney that wins the hearts, all the world over."

"It's a shame that it should when it is such thorough-going blarney as yours, Connor dear. I don't think you should have sent those verses to Lesbia. She does not know you as well as I do, and perhaps she'll believe all that farrago you wrote about your love being a gold throne for

her to sit upon for ever, and your thoughts her slaves following her in chains. Oh, Connor, Connor, when I know what erratic creatures they are—it makes me laugh, but she might possibly take it seriously."

"And it's heaven's truth she'll be taking in if she does. I don't know why you won't believe me, Ellen, for I've been saying the same thing to you for the last six weeks without a breath of change. A man may be in love, and keep a little fun and life in him. He need not look black death and thunder at all the world like Pelham, I should hope; and I have loved that little darling in the red house yonder ever since the day when she made me savage by laughing at me."

"Six weeks ago," put in Ellen.

"And why won't I love her for ever? I don't care if all the world knows of it."

"But I advise you not to let Mrs. Joseph Maynard know of it, or there'll be no peace for poor little Lesbia. Pelham too——"

"Hang Pelham! What right has he to put in his oar? He took against her at first. He sha'n't cut in now, and, spoil everything—I won't have it."

"He leaves us to-morrow, Connor dear. Don't say a word to vex him again. Don't let him know that you have really sent that letter, or for any sake breathe a word of its

being put in one of his envelopes. We shall both be sorry to-morrow if we vex him again to-day."

"You never vex anyone—you are a regular little saint. It was Pelham's taking it upon himself to find fault with you, that bothered me, more than his interference about Lesbia. I can stand anything from him better than his bullying you."

"He does not intend to bully—it's his English way; and, Connor avourneen, what I want from you, is just a promise to take no notice however sulky he is the rest of this day, but to help me to coax him round. If blarney is good for anything, it is to keep peace at home, among brothers and sisters, don't you think? There is papa's voice calling me. Connor, I'm sure that some important news has come in those letters you took in. I have had a strange unsettled feeling on me all day, as if something was coming. Suppose only it should be news that took us home."

"Put in a word for Lesbia Maynard's going with us then, or I had rather stay where we are."

CHAPTER XIII.

"But the youngest sister had to sit at home and darn stockings."
Cinderella.

"ONE letter for mamma, and four for papa—and, hollo! two for Babette. I say, Miss Babette sha'n't have her letters this minute though. I'll pay her out for dragging me in from the garden, by keeping them in my pocket till after dinner." Muttering thus to himself, little Walter Maynard, who had constituted himself supplementary letter-deliverer to the family, slipped two of the letters he had abstracted from the letter-box into his knickerbocker pockets and trotted into the parlour with the rest of his budget. Dr. Maynard was out on his morning round of visits among his patients. Mrs. Maynard inspected the outsides of his letters and read her own, while Lesbia looked up wistfully towards the little letter-carrier, from the copy-book, along which she was guiding Bobby Maynard's red stumpy fingers in their first efforts to make pot-hooks and hangers; and *sighed*. She had not had a letter for a whole week. It

was too bad of Bride, and the ready April tears swelled in her eyes, till one large bright drop overflowed and fell.

"There, Baby, it was you made me make that great blot. Yes, it was," cried Bob, twisting his head round, so as to see her face. "Why, you are crying! Mamma, here's cousin Babette crying again. Isn't she a baby?"

Thus appealed to, Mrs. Maynard looked up from her letter; her face had rather a startled expression upon it, and the children thought her voice and her words, too, sounded odd.

"You are a very naughty boy, I am sure, Bobby, if you have made your cousin Lesbia cry, when she is so kind as to give you a writing-lesson. You may get down now and let Walter come and write."

"It was not Bobby's fault," said Lesbia, twinkling away her tears, and brightening instantly into smiles and dimples under the unexpected ray of kindness; "but, oh, dear Aunt, need Walter write to-day? My fingers are so hot and tired with holding Bobby's, and I'll give Walter some other kind of lesson by and bye to make up."

She strolled off to the window without waiting for an answer, clasping her tired hands behind her head. Mrs. Maynard's eyes rested on her for a minute or two, considerингly, and then turned back to re-peruse a sentence in her letter.

"We have all here been much excited by a report that has reached us of the death, at Florence, of Dr. Maynard's uncle—that rich old Mr. Maynard you told me about. They say he has left an immense fortune behind him, two hundred thousand pounds at the least, and that it is all to go to one of his great-nephews or nieces; we are hoping that the lucky heir is one of your fine boys. Let us know soon."

Mrs. Maynard's fingers strayed to the letters on the chimney-piece; the news must be in one of them. What a provoking thing it was that Dr. Maynard should have gone out that morning on one of his longest rounds, and that he should so often have declared his determination to keep his letters to himself, that even with such a question as this hanging over her, his wife dare not meddle with them. An immense fortune for one of her boys—for darling Johnny, the old man's godson. Surely Providence could not have allowed anything else to happen. The anxious mother's thoughts flew back to question every incident of the last occasion, when old John Maynard had come down to Whitecliffe expressly to spend an evening at their house. Which of the children had he noticed most? —Those tiresome ever-ready tears and smiles of Lesbia's! She was an awkward girl of thirteen then, not so very pretty, and old John had hardly looked at her till, just as

he was taking leave, he poked his hand under her chin, and asked her abruptly if she was sorry to be separated from her brother and sister; then those provoking bright large tears had come into her babyish brown eyes, and the old man had turned away, and had a violent fit of coughing. Perhaps he hated tears. It was fortunate that he had not seen Lesbia within the last year or two, for certainly she was an alarmingly pretty girl now—an anxious charge for anyone. Good gracious! suppose for an instant the two hundred thousand pounds should go to her, what could be done then? Johnny, the eldest of their family, was only fourteen—three years younger than Lesbia —and those two had never been friends. Only last Christmas holidays he had locked her up in the dark closet at the head of the stairs, and she had remained in the cold, forgotten by everyone, till Dr. Maynard asked for her at tea-time, and went to let her out. Yet they had all been extremely kind to her; she herself, at all events, could answer for having spent, strictly for Lesbia's benefit, very nearly all the money sent by the elder brother and sister, deducting only quite small sums to remunerate herself for all the trouble and care she had been put to. There could not be much to complain of in management under which she had grown up—the fresh, bright-eyed, pink-cheeked creature that stood idling in the window

there, so different from the plain elder sister. Again Mrs. Maynard's eyes fixed themselves on Lesbia, and as she took a more curious inventory of her charms than she had ever troubled herself to make before, she came to the conclusion, that if by perverse fate Lesbia did prove to be the heiress of the fortune that ought to come to her son, it would become her all her life to be extremely grateful to the disinterested cousins who had brought her up, and to acknowledge that she owed it somehow to them that her dark hair was so abundant, and of such a rich colour, that her figure was so slim and graceful, and that such a rich peach-bloom glowed under the clear brown of her cheeks. Had not all these endowments come to her under their roof?

Dr. Maynard did not return home at his usual hour, and in consequence the early dinner was one of the scenes of riot and squabble among the boys, and ineffectual scolding from Mrs. Maynard, that were a perpetual jar on little Lesbia's natural love of order and refinement. Her thoughts were busy during the meal, planning some legitimate method of securing a quiet afternoon for herself.

"You look very tired, Aunt" (she called Mrs. Maynard aunt, though she was in reality only her cousin by marriage). "You look tired, and I am sure your head is aching," she said, after dinner was over. "Let me do the week's mend-

ing for you this afternoon. I will take the stocking-basket into the old conservatory, where I shall have no interruption, and I will get all done by tea-time, and you can lie down and rest."

Mrs. Maynard hesitated a minute. All dinner-time she had been looking at Lesbia in the light of a possible great heiress, and the habit she had fallen into of using her as a household drudge did not look so just and natural as it had seemed any time these last seven years. On the other hand, was it not a true kindness to the girl, if this temptation of great wealth were really coming, to let her do one more afternoon's useful work? She should not be the worse for it, if things turned out as they ought to do, and Johnny's advancement lay in one of those thick letters on the chimney-piece. Mrs. Maynard made up her mind to be very generous, in that case, to Lesbia, and make her a present of the cornelian brooch she had seen her look at longingly so often, behind its glass-case on the pier. She would quite deserve that and other little marks of favour as well perhaps, if events proved her not to have been guilty of wiling old John Maynard's fortune from him by those well-remembered crocodile tears.

"You are really a very good girl, Babette, to remember the mending," she said cordially, "and as I think it likely I may have to talk over some important business with Dr.

Maynard when he comes in, I shall be much obliged to you if you will get it done."

Lesbia ran upstairs quite elated with the few kind words and the success of her little scheme, and forbore to scold Walter for lifting the heaped-up work-basket from its shelf in the wardrobe before she came up, and disturbing its contents by thrusting his hands into it.

"You are going to be very good boys all this afternoon, Walter and Bobby," she said coaxingly, "and when I have finished my work I will tell you over again the whole story of the terrible fight at Ballyowen fair, and how nearly your cousin John Thornley had his arm broken by the red-haired Irishman, who tried to pull him off his horse."

The conservatory was a dilapidated little place entered by a door and some stone steps from the back-room where Dr. Maynard occasionally saw his patients. It was many years since all pretence of keeping it supplied with plants had been abandoned, and it was seldom entered now by anyone but Lesbia, who liked to shut herself in among the cobwebs and broken flower-pots because it was the only place in the house where she could feel herself quite safe from the boys, who did not dare to pursue her across their father's territory. She used to study her lessons there, for the masters her brother and sister insisted on giving her. There she diligently carried on the skilful

contrivances with her needle and scissors, and stores of ribbon and net, that gave her much-worn gowns and bonnets the dainty air so puzzling to Ellen Daly. There she laughed aloud, and sometimes cried and trembled over her sister's letters from Ireland; and there, seated on the stone steps with her elbows on her knees, and her dimpled chin propped between her hands, she dreamed her girlish dreams of all the good the future was to bring her. If the thronging, brightly-coloured thoughts could only have taken shape as they rose up and photographed themselves on the cracked panes of glass round her, what a curious and pretty series of decorations the old tumble-down outhouse would have had, and how surprised Lesbia would have been, on getting up from her seat and walking round when the hour of castle-building was over, to observe what a very prominent place a certain slim, dark-eyed personage held in all the pictures! She would have been quite certain that she did not really think as highly of herself as all that, and was not in truth so selfish as to want so many good things and so much praise and prosperity all for herself. The bright fancies, however, generally came when the fingers were idle. Work, unless it was very pretty work, had rather a depressing effect on Lesbia's spirits, and on that day there were several reasons for her thoughts taking the sombre hue of the dull grey material she was forced to

look at. She had got up in the morning expecting something very pleasant to happen that afternoon, and oh, what a dull, trying day it had been! How leaden the sea and sky looked, seen through the dusty, cobwebby glass panes! How melancholy the wind sounded, and the flap, flap of the untrained briar-rose branches against the conservatory roof! When she and the young Dalys parted last night at the garden-gate, she had said to herself that she would enjoy one more merry day with her friends, and not allow herself to think once of what was coming, but the rain had cheated her of her respite. Of course there would be fine days after this. Even at Whitecliffe it could not rain for ever, and she and Ellen and Connor would walk and sail again together; but it would not be quite the same as it had been. It never was the same in a party when one member of it had gone away. Mr. Pelham Daly's departure was the beginning of the break-up of all that had made this summer so different from every other. The end would come very soon. Other people left Whitecliffe when the dreary autumn and wild winter days set in, but she, Lesbia, had to stay there always. The Dalys would go certainly. The house opposite would be shut up, or some stupid people would take it, and she would walk down the parade or along the sands with Bobby and Watty, when there would be no possibility of those three figures

looming upon her in the distance, whose approach changed the dullest and most monotonous walk into something fresh and pleasant. She might never again hear a word about them through all her life, or perhaps some day Dr. Maynard would read the marriage of one of them from the newspaper at breakfast, and say to his wife, "That Mr. Pelham Daly, who has made such a grand marriage, must surely be the eldest brother of the young lady who once, a good many years ago, took a sort of fancy to Lesbia." That would be the way they would put it, and that would be the truth. Changes would come to others, but she must go on living just here, through long summers when the parade was hot and crowded with strangers who never came to be friends, and through windy winters when the place was a desert, teaching Bobby and Watty, and darning their socks on rainy days among the broken flower-pots till—till—she was thirty perhaps, or even forty, and had deep hollows under her eyes and grey streaks in her hair, and had grown silent and sour-looking like the Miss Johnstones next door. Lesbia could not bear the picture she had conjured up one moment longer, it was too dreadful; she snatched the sock she was darning from her hand with a childish gesture of despair, and, turning round, threw her arms on the upper step of the flight she was sitting on, and, leaning her forehead against them, groaned aloud.

Down fell the work-basket by her side, hopping from step to step in its fall, and scattering its miscellaneous contents all around. Lesbia sprang up to arrest its progress, and there, staring her in the face on the top of a pile of stockings, lay the two letters Walter had kept back in the morning. She seized them with a cry of joy, hardly caring to consider how they came to be there, and tore open the uppermost envelope. A sheet in her brother's handwriting caught her eye first. The sight caused a thrill of alarm, for it was not often John wrote to her. Oh! if while she had been groaning over imaginary troubles, bad news from him awaited her. If Bride should be ill. Away flew her self-occupation and little vanities, dispelled by a tumult of tender fears.

"My dear little sister," she read, "I flatter myself, as a letter from me is rather a rarity, that you will take my sheet and read it first. You had better do so, for I have some important news to tell you, and you will understand it in my plain words sooner than if you get it first wrapped up in all the loves and cautions and congratulations that Bride is busy just now putting into her sheet. Of course you have often heard of our old grand-uncle John Maynard. I think you saw him four years ago when he spent a day at Whitecliffe, and I hope he left a sufficiently pleasant

impression of himself on your mind for you to feel some sorrow when I tell you he is dead. Call back and cherish any kind recollection of him you can, little Babette, for he was very good to you in his last thoughts. He has left all his fortune to you, so that in reading these words in my letter a new sort of life opens out before you. May you be thoroughly happy and act worthily in it, little one! You will hardly understand at first all the change it will make, but one immediate consequence of what has happened is, that there is no longer any need for us three to live apart. We are setting our wits to work to devise a speedy method for transporting you here; so be prepared to take a journey to Ireland soon. Be sure that Bride and I rejoice utterly in your good fortune, and mentally shake hands with you on it from across the sea. If anyone else says anything, satisfy your conscience (you see I am giving you credit for being too scrupulous concerning other people's rights to be over-elated with your own luck) by reflecting that old John Maynard had a right to do what he pleased with his own money; he got very little pleasure out of it while he was alive, and he has chosen you to enjoy the benefit of his savings and his labours because you are the youngest pet child of our mother, who was a daughter to him once, and the most like her. If those two have met up there after their long estrangement, Bride and

I think that she will be glad of what he has done for you. I am writing to explain it to all the Maynards. By the way, one clause of the will enacts that you are to take the name of Maynard, and give it to your husband if—or shall I say when you marry—so you will keep our dear mother's name, Lesbia Maynard, to the end of the chapter.

"Your affectionate brother and faithful guardian,

"JOHN THORNLEY."

Lesbia read this letter twice over before the full meaning of the words forced itself on her mind; and then it was not elation, nor joy, nor regret for other people's disappointment, that rushed in with it. The tender little heart swelled first, with a pang of remorseful shame, such as a little child feels who has been angry with its mother for leaving it alone, and been surprised on her return by the present of a fine new toy. She had been discontented with her lot, thinking herself hardly used, and all the while God and that old man had been preparing this wondrous change for her. She bent her head down humbly on her clasped hands, and tried to shape a prayer out of the tumult of thoughts and emotions that welled up. Had the old life really gone from her in that moment? The stocking-darnings, Mrs. Maynard's perpetual fault-finding, Bobby's fits of sulks over his lessons,

the shabby clothes, the grumblings she used to hear against Bride and John for not sending more money? Was it all over, and in its place a dazzling vista of prosperity and joy opening out before her? How much easier it would have been to bear patiently all the little pains of the old life, if she had only known they were not to last for ever! She certainly would not have given Bobby that box on the ear last night when he overthrew her work-box, or have refused to cover Johnny's books when he last went back to school, because he had teazed her so all the holidays. For five minutes, instead of looking forward, Lesbia was absorbed in wishing vehemently that she could have two or three of the last years over again, that she might so comport herself in them as to make them a worthy background for what was to come. Well, it would be easy to make up for every shortcoming now. She would forgive all little wrongs, and make everyone in the house a splendid present the very first thing. Mrs. Maynard should have a velvet dress, and the Doctor a new carriage, and Bobby and Walter every toy or story-book they had ever mentioned with longing. She would be a benevolent fairy, divining everyone's wishes, and scattering gifts in their path. A great wave of intoxicating joy rushed in now, swallowing up all soberer thoughts. She seized Bride's closely-written

sheets and began to read, only pausing now and then to press eager kisses on the affectionate words. As she reached the last sentence, a bell in the house rang, and she started up with exactly the same feeling she had had a hundred times before, when that sound had called her back from a brilliant day-dream.

The tea-bell—was it possible that this was a common day, and that people were going to take their meals just as usual? The news John's letter had brought faded and lost all significance for her—just as a castle-in-the-air would have faded. She did not believe a word of her change of fortune. Life was going on just as usual, and there was she, her work undone, and the contents of Mrs. Maynard's work-basket scattered all over the conservatory floor. She began to collect the socks and replace them in the basket with trembling fingers; the last thing she took up was Connor's letter. More news on that wonderful day. Curiosity conquered fear, and she opened and read. The rhymes seemed to ring in her head and make her giddy. Did they belong to the old Lesbia, who sat down on the steps with her work two hours ago? or to the new one that was coming? She felt like a person standing on a bridge, leading from one country to another, who can only hear the swell of the dividing waters rushing below. "Yet, oh! she wears the plainest gown." A little smile

came to her lips, as she paused over that line, on her third reading, and before she had made up her mind whether she was glad or sorry that the person who wrote it would have to change his description of her in the future, the conservatory door half opened, and the parlour-maid, with a very satirical expression of face, poked her head in.

"Mrs. Maynard desires her respectful compliments, and wishes to know how much longer it is Miss Lesbia Thornley's pleasure to keep them all waiting for tea."

Lesbia drew up her head, and mounted the steps slowly. John's letter had grown perfectly real again; but the warm pleasant thoughts about good-will to all, and splendid presents, had received a painful check. She understood quite well that Mrs. Joseph Maynard had sent her a declaration of war, and that she must not expect anyone in that house to be glad with her to-night. It was hard to have to bring her tumult of feeling under the ken of cold unsympathising eyes—hard to have no kind shoulder near to lean her throbbing head against, while she talked out her wonder and excitement. John and Bride were far out of reach, and she felt very lonely. There was that second letter in her hand, perhaps after all it told better news than the first. It was balm to her wounded heart to know that someone had been feeling all those fine things about her, while the Maynards loved

her so little. She thought she should always feel very much obliged to Mr. Connor Daly for writing her that letter, even though he had remarked upon the poorness of her gowns. She paused under the gas-burner in the hall, for it was already dark in the house, to study once more the handwriting on the outside of the letter, and as she held the envelope up to the light her eye fell on the monogram outside—P.D. All at once a vivid crimson flushed her face, and after a furtive glance round to see that no one was near, she raised the corner of the paper to her lips, and then thrusting it deep into her pocket, walked boldly into the parlour to confront her angry cousins.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Ah, could we live
As friend with friend,
As though each passing hour must give
That friendship sudden end."—ANON.

"COME, Ellen. All stratagems are fair in love; and if you don't drop such a hint of Cousin Anne's alarms as will frighten Lesbia Maynard into joining us in our sudden flight to Castle Daly, I'll be forced to forge a letter from her precious brother to summon her to Ireland in a hurry. He'll have to get his head broken in a scrimmage; ——or stay, he shall fight a duel with Darby O'Roone and be shot through the heart, dead; and the sister, hurrying to meet the corpse as it is brought in at the front door, shall fall down and break her leg. I'll write a neat letter from old Dr. O'Moore conveying the pleasing intelligence, if you persist in your obstinacy: for, to leave the darling at twenty-four hours' notice, just after telling her she's the jewel of my heart, and without knowing

how she takes the news, is what Connor Daly is not the boy to do—let Pelham Daly say what he will."

"And you would frighten her to death to prove your affection!"

"Once get her safely wiled away with us, and leave it to me to comfort her, and let her know, all in good time, that the letter was just a *slight* misunderstanding."

"She would hate you for ever afterwards for giving her such a fright."

"Not she, when she understood it was all the way I had of keeping near her. If I thought she had such a poor heart as not to put up with a bit of a fright about a brother or a sister, that her lover planned to save them from parting, by Jove! Pelham would be welcome to have her, for she'd not be the girl for me."

"I should think it the poor heart that would put the lover above the brother. What will you say, Con, when I do that same?"

"Find a lover to love you half as well as your brother Connor, and you are welcome to put him where you will."

"Oh, the King of Blarney that he is; but I shall not look out for one that will match you that way: and, Connor dear, I think you have carried the blarney a taste too far with Lesbia, and that she is annoyed by

your sending her those verses. I wrote a little note last night to let her know that we were leaving Whitecliffe in a day or two, and there has been no sign in answer from her yet. She has not appeared at window or door, and just now I saw Mrs. Maynard leave the house, driving the whole troop of boys before her, and no Lesbia. Can she be ill?"

"I vow I'll not leave the place if she is, till I have seen her again. She has the tenderest little heart in the world; and you may depend my verses——"

"Have half killed her with the laugh over them she has had. Oh, Connor, how glad I am I'm not in love with anyone, and that no one's in love with me. I would not have the pleasure of going home spoilt by having to give a thought or a look back to the noblest lover in the world. I am glad there is not the least beginning of a slender thread to hold my heart from home."

Ellen danced to the window, threw it up as she spoke, and leaned out. "You won't get a sorrowful good-bye from me," she cried; "you poor little bits of white stones that call yourselves rocks, and you dull, leaden sea down there creeping up to them, and you great lonely cornfields and meadows, and straight roads, where one never meets a friendly face, or hears a 'God save you kindly.' Won't

I shake the dust of you from my feet when I go with a laughing heart!"

"Without a thought of the friend you leave behind you? That's what a woman's friendship's worth."

"Little Lesbia? Of course, I shall be sorry to say good-bye to her; but, Con, I can't seriously put her beside Cousin Anne and home. Oh, the smell of the peat, and the sparkle of our own lake, and the thunder of real waves on the shore, and the friendly warm words, and faces that brighten when one comes near! I did not know how sick my heart was for them all till now. It will be always that way with me. You may make much of falling in love, if you like. With me nothing will ever come near home and my own people. Those blessed, stupid fears of Cousin Anne's, how I thank them for dragging us back?"

"If thanks and blessings are flying about I shall put in my claim for a share. Trace back far enough, and I'm the moving spring that set all the little wheels in motion that pull the rope that is drawing you."

"Connor, I hope not! How can you have had anything to do with our people's discontent against Mr. Thornley, and the troubles that have worked papa up to such a state of indignation that he cannot rest here a week longer?"

"Not intentionally, perhaps; but if I had not stood by

Dennis Malachy at the time you know of, and cleverly kept my father and other people from finding him out for the sworn rebel and Ribbonman I knew him to be, would he ever have had that little place by the edge of the bog given to him? And if my father had not put him there, could Mr. Thornley have turned him out? And if he had not had his roof lifted off his head, would there have been the black blood there is between his faction and Mr. Thornley? Cousin Anne would never have heard that gun fired, and we should have stayed here till the end of the chapter."

"You don't think it a fancy of Anne's. You think the danger real, and that Dennis Malachy is in it?"

"I think Thornley is a dunderheaded pedant, who will set the country on fire if he's left to work his own will; and that it is high time my father was home again. I agree with Anne that he ought never to have left his post," said Connor, grandly.

"It's easy talking; but with mamma so ill, and always so sad-hearted, I don't know what he could have done but travel about to please her. There are moments when I hate myself for being glad to go home; for, Connor, I saw a look on her face when we were all talking and laughing last night that just broke my heart. She looked as if she thought it was to her death she was going, and you and I

laughing over it. I hope the day won't come, Con, when you'll hate to think it was your doing."

"If you don't manage it so that Lesbia Maynard goes with us, I'll hate to think of it now. Ellen, is not the door of the Red House opening this minute? Is not that she herself coming down the garden to the street? You look; I dare not."

"Gracious! what a sudden fit of modesty. Yes, there she is, with her head up, stepping daintily. What pretty, gay-plumaged little bird is she like? There must be company at the Maynards'. She is wearing the lilac-chequered silk dress that becomes her so well, and generally only comes out on Sunday, and her freshest bonnet. Perhaps it is a protest to show you that she does not always wear the 'poorest gown,' and scorns to fall back upon the airy clothing you propose to invest her with."

"Ellen, don't. You have not a spark of poetry in your composition, I declare, or you would let those lines alone. Why, positively there's Pelham rushing out to open the door; he must have been on the look-out for her from the dining-room window. Hang him! he'll get the first word, and fancy that it is for his sake she looks down-hearted about our leaving Whitecliffe."

"But I don't think she does look down-hearted. As well as I can judge from the window, she is a little more

smiling and important than usual in her lilac dress—like a little bantam hen fur-belowed down to her feet."

"I shall rush off, and come back in time to escort her home, and have her for a few minutes all to myself; I can't stand Pelham's watching."

Connor condescended to the undignified measure of peeping over the balusters when he had reached the landing of the topmost story of the house. He had the satisfaction of seeing Lesbia Maynard mount the lowest flight of stairs alone; but he had previously surprised a look on her face, as she and Pelham stood on the door-mat together shaking hands, that disposed him to dash into his own room and relieve his mind for the next quarter of an hour by throwing his boots and hair-brushes about.

Lesbia paused at the drawing-room door to put up her hands and try to smooth the inconvenient rush of colour out of her burning cheeks. She herself was not at all surprised at the great bound her heart had given when the door had opened and she had found herself face to face with Pelham Daly on the door-mat. It was only natural she should start and look confused; for just at that very moment she had been saying to herself that he must have left Whitecliffe hours ago, and that she should certainly never see him again. The surprise was quite enough to account for and excuse her blushes, but

she did not care to bring them under Ellen's eyes. She thought it behoved her to be very calm and dignified on the occasion of this visit. Important events had occurred since she was last in that room, and it would require all the judiciousness she could muster to speak of them worthily to the friend whose character, frank and gay as her manners were, somehow or other puzzled her a little.

Ellen saw the effort and constraint in Lesbia's manner at a glance, and before they were seated exclaimed, "What is the matter? What has happened since the day before yesterday, Babetta?"

"Oh, so many things; you can have no idea," said Lesbia; and then she possessed herself of the blind-tassel that had been Pelham's plaything the day before, and began to plait and unplait its threads; while Ellen, looking down into her face, wondered what the expression exactly was that had come into it within the last forty-eight hours, and changed it so greatly.

"I got your letter last night," Lesbia began, waking up at last.

"And you are *so* sorry to lose us," Ellen cried, feeling penitently that she had not rated the warmth of Lesbia's affectionateness rightly before.

"What makes you say *so* sorry?"

Ellen passed her finger lightly along a red line that encircled Lesbia's eyes. "Don't I know how this comes?" she said; "and will I ever forget that you cared enough for us to shed tears at our going, you dear little friend? Nay, don't colour so furiously; you don't suppose I would let the conceited boys know? there would be no bearing with their vanity for ever afterwards if I did."

"It was not that," said Lesbia, glowing brighter and brighter, till she was obliged to put up her hands again to hide her cheeks. "Ellen, I can't tell you stuck up on a chair; let me come and sit on that stool by your feet, and then I shall be able to speak. Some news came to our house yesterday."

"And we had news too—excellent news—for it has determined papa, as I told you, to go back to Ireland at once. You will not be able to match that, I am afraid."

"I don't know; but, Ellen, I must tell you first that I did not cry because you were to leave Whitecliffe, but because I have had a great quarrel with my cousins. Mrs. Maynard has been very unkind to me."

"My poor, dear Babetta! but that is nothing new; does it not happen every day?"

"Yes, indeed; but this quarrel was serious, and the unkindness what I cannot forget. She called me a serpent

and a hypocrite, and said that John and Bride had deceived her—and—I answered. I don't know how it happened, for I had been feeling so kindly towards her a few minutes before; but all the angry thoughts that I have had in my heart against her for seven years seemed under the provocation of her grudging words to rise up and fly out of my mouth. I was not frightened at the moment, but I have been shaking and trembling almost ever since. This morning she is sorry, and would like to be friends with me again, but I cannot. She showed me her heart last night, and it was so full of envy and grudging I can never bear with her again. Ellen, do you think your mother would let me travel with you to Ireland when you go, to join John and Bride?"

"Think? I am sure she will. It is just what Connor and I were planning. Of course, you shall go home with us at once, and break free from Mrs. Maynard for ever—bad luck to her. I do congratulate you now, Babetta, though you don't know what it is you are going to. Why, your news is as good as ours."

"But you have not heard it yet; the quarrel came afterwards. I had my news in a letter from Ireland."

"So ours came."

"But they cannot be the same; for mine concerns myself—me more than any one else in the world," said Lesbia,

raising her head, that had been half resting against Ellen's knee. "Do you remember what I told you once about my rich grand-uncle, John Maynard?"

"I guess, I guess! he is dead, and has left all his money to you; and you cannot rest till you have seen your brother, and given up the inheritance to him, that he only lost through his faithfulness to your father. I remember the story quite well; and, dear Lesbia, I have always been expecting this to happen, and that you would act as you are going to do. If your mean-spirited cousins oppose your wish to do justice to your brother, we will stand up for you and help you through. I suppose that was what the quarrel began upon?"

"Why, no. I had not thought of all that. I am not so quick as you. I don't suppose I could give my fortune away, or that anything would induce John or Bride to take it. You don't know them. Here is John's letter; read what he says."

"I like it," Ellen pronounced, when she came to the end. "Well, I suppose it will be all the same, for you cannot be rich without your brother and sister sharing. They who provided for you ever since your mother died, they'll never be so unkind as not to take part of what you have now."

"Of course we shall live together; that is the great

happiness my fortune brings to me. But still it is I who shall have to take my uncle's name, and be Lesbia Maynard, and an heiress. John calls himself my faithful guardian, you see."

"He has always been that, has he not?"

"Yes, indeed. I have not seen them for seven years—not since I was a little child; but I know they are the best people in the world. I don't suppose I shall ever laugh and joke with them as you do with your brothers. Bride is so old, and John so dreadfully clever. I am going home, but I don't know what home will be like. Last night, after the quarrel with my cousins, I think I felt more frightened at the change in my fortune than glad. The one cheerful thought I had to turn to was the prospect of travelling with you, whom I know, to Castle Daly, and have you near me at first to help me."

"That we will. We will have glorious times all together there."

"But—but you will not all be there?"

"All but Pelham; he remains with us till we leave Whitecliffe, and then goes to Oxford to take his degree. I suppose we shall have him living at home always after that, unless papa consents to his going into the army, as he wishes. Castle Daly is not to him what it is to Connor and me; he longs to get away to India—anywhere

from the poor old place, that is not just trim and grand enough for him; but there are difficulties in the way. Mamma does not like parting with him, and papa talks of expense. I don't know how it will be settled."

"I must say good-bye now, or I shall keep the Maynards' dinner waiting, and be scolded again. You will let me know what your mother says about taking charge of me on the journey, before post time, will you not? And, Ellen, perhaps you will not mind not saying anything about my fortune to your brothers or any one, just yet? I had rather not speak of it again till after I have seen John and Bride."

"I understand. You think you may possibly be able to give the fortune up to your brother, or divide it with him; and in that case you had rather not have it spoken of as yours now. I will be careful. I won't even be provoked to give a hint, if a person we know of takes liberties, in verse, with your gowns again. Oh, Babetta, how I shall laugh at him for that by and by."

"At him? But I thought you said you never did laugh at him—that you were afraid."

"Afraid of laughing at Connor! I do nothing else but laugh at him all day long. Is not he the boy one must laugh at and love? There, I hear him opening his door softly upstairs, that he may be ready to meet you

accidentally on the stairs as you go out and escort you home."

"Oh, no, no; don't let him," cried Lesbia, whose changeful face had suddenly clouded over with a blank look of mortification. "Please, please stop him; I could not bear to talk nonsense to him to-day, I have so much to think of. I want to get home quietly without any more talk, I do indeed."

"You shall, then, if I have to hold Connor down in his chair; only don't tire your poor eyes with any more tears. Babetta, you really must not be so rainy when you get to Ireland. The sky does all the weeping there, and our faces have to make sunshine. I shall not let you do anything but laugh at Castle Daly."

With a hasty farewell Lesbia ran downstairs and fled across the road, and up the little garden path, not suffering herself to pause and take breath till she was safe shut into the attic bedroom she shared with Bobbie and Wattie. There was no real occasion for so much haste; and she rather wondered at herself for the energy of her flight, not knowing that it was, in truth, from an unwelcome thought she was fleeing. The thought overtook her, of course, as soon as she stood still and began to take off and fold away her walking dress. It came in the shape of another of the revulsions of feeling from elation to de-

pression, that had been uneasily rocking her poor little heart and brain for the last twenty-four hours. There had been a certain glow upon her—a bright haze of exultation and new consequence investing all her surroundings, when she had stood before the glass, an hour before, dressing herself for her visit to the Dalys; and now she felt as if she had had a fall, and was bruised and shaken by it. Those verses that had been chiming in her head all the morning did not mean so very much, after all. They were no secret between herself and one other person; Ellen Daly had laughed over them, and Connor had written them.

She would be grateful to Connor, she resolved; he had been her first friend and champion, and certainly he wrote beautiful verses; only he need not have said the *poorest* gown, poor was such an ugly word, and was not applicable to her when she was dressed her worst, really; and somehow the remark seemed a greater liberty in him than if it had come from some one else whom she could better forgive for knowing always what she had on, and for perhaps thinking nothing good enough for her.

Then this fortune. Ellen Daly had not seemed to think of it as really hers at all; it had struck her only as a thing to be given away at once, just as if its having been left to her did not invest her with a lasting right in it Lesbia stood still for nearly a quarter of an hour mechani-

cally smoothing a crease out of her bonnet string, and turning this reflection over and over in her mind.

With all her heart and soul she wished and intended to be generous to John and Bride. She meant to give them everything she had; but then she had thought of always going on *giving*, not of doing it once for all, and having no power or part in the matter afterwards; becoming John's little sister again, instead of being, as she had begun to think herself, Lesbia Maynard his ward, to whom he was faithful guardian. That hasty, utter giving up of all at once to John Thornley looked rather a flat and uninteresting conclusion to the bright dreams and hopes, that, even in the last twelve hours, she had begun to weave round herself.

Another sort of giving away had in truth been in her mind, but, as she finally rolled up her bonnet strings, she decided with a sigh that the opportunity for it would now never come: the glorious chance of being wooed poor and giving herself rich, which had seemed so close to her this morning. Before she had done fancying how it possibly might have been, the bell rang, and she had to leave her bonnet on the table and run down breathless to dinner.

CHAPTER XV.

ELLEN did not find a good opportunity for bringing forward Lesbia's request till the evening, when the family were sitting together after dinner; and she was so conscious that Pelham's and Connor's eyes were turned upon her the instant she introduced her friend's name into the conversation, that she could not bring out her plan quite in the simple, unconcerned manner she had intended. Her eagerness was enough to raise a host of little nervous scruples and doubts as to the propriety of the arrangement in Mrs. Daly's mind.

In the first place, who was Lesbia Maynard, and how did they know that she was any relation to the Mr. and Miss Thornley who were now living at Castle Daly? And again, what proof had they that her brother and sister approved of her leaving her cousin, Dr. Maynard's house? Might they not be abetting an act of rebellion against rightful authority, if they aided her sudden flight? When

Connor and Ellen had exhausted themselves in vehement explanations and assurances on these points, came another difficulty, which Mrs. Daly, by way of giving a turn to the conversation, and possibly saving herself from a second avalanche of indignant words, referred to her husband:

"If this Miss Maynard, or Thornley, is sister to your agent, and is likely to live with him for the future, would it be well to encourage such intimacy between her and Ellen, as a long journey together would certainly lead to?"

"What does it matter?" answered Mr. Daly, carelessly. "What harm could Mr. Thornley do Ellen? And besides, I don't suppose he or his sisters will continue to live in the neighbourhood of Castle Daly after I return there."

"And nothing can make me more intimate with Lesbia than I am already," cried Ellen.

Pelham had risen from the table and retired to a dark corner of the room with a newspaper, while Ellen and Connor had been dinning their mother's ears with assurances of Lesbia's respectability and identity: just now he came forward again and leaned over her chair.

"You forget, mother," he said, quietly, "that these Thornleys are relations of Uncle Charles and of your own."

"Are they, indeed? Yes, I suppose it is so; but we lost sight of them so long ago that, though I can recollect

some Thornleys visiting at Pelham Court, I don't know what degree of relationship there may be between ourselves and these young people."

"They are cousins. Their grandfather, Sir Francis Thornley, married your aunt. John Thornley's father was the youngest son of that Sir Francis."

"Pelham, how came you to know all that?" asked Ellen.

"I looked it out in the pedigree," said Pelham firmly; "it is right that we should know the fact, and treat our own relations with proper consideration, whatever position of life they may be in now."

"To be sure," cried Connor, laughing; "such nobs as we are. If people do happen to be so lucky as to have a drop of good old obstinate Pelham blood in them, let us treat them with reverence by all means. Up with the purple token on a flag—a drop of unmistakable English blood—and let the Irish half of us own our masters. It beats keeping a gig for a warrant of respectability, to be related in the fourth degree to a Pelham. Why have not the savages round Castle Daly been readier to do homage?"

"Hush! Connor, hush!" said Mr. Daly, putting a hand on his son's arm.

Mrs. Daly was, meanwhile, looking up into her eldest son's face, and reading an expression in the dark eyes that met hers, which caused her a certain *serrement de cœur.*

"I did not know that you had much acquaintance with these friends of Ellen's, Pelham," she said apologetically; "I thought you objected to the intimacy once."

"I made a mistake then," he answered bluntly.

"Well, if you really think it right, and your father approves; but" (turning again to Mr. Daly with an eager air, as if grasping at a last straw) "have there not been complaints against these Thornleys in your Irish letters? Does not Anne O'Flaherty think ill of them for some cause or other?"

"An excellent reason for your thinking well of them, is it not, Eleanor?" Mr. Daly answered, smiling. "I should say that settled the matter. Anne O'Flaherty dislikes both the Thornleys cordially, so you have nothing to do but write at once to their sister, and invite her, in your warmest manner, to join us on the journey. It is only a mark of disagreement due from you to Anne."

It was not often that he addressed sarcastic remarks to her now, and they had not quite the same effect they had formerly. A faint flush on the faded cheek, a bewildered, appealing expression of pain in the eyes answered them now, instead of the old panoply of cold reserve.

Mr. Daly saw at once that his words had given pain, and tried to atone for them by an eager—

"Do just as you like about it, however, Eleanor; you are the best judge."

She leaned back in her chair wearily.

"I wish you would all go out and leave me alone," she said, "for I am very tired of hearing you all talk at once. Ellen will carry out her plan, of course; I give her free leave: but I wish she was not so ingenious in inventing schemes to bring new cares on me, as if I had not always more than I have strength for."

The party dispersed. Ellen settled her mother for her after-dinner rest on the sofa in the drawing-room, and then hurried off with Connor to make a late call at the house opposite and talk over the arrangements for the journey with Lesbia. Mr. Daly, after finishing his newspaper and his bottle of claret, turned out for his evening stroll up and down the parade with his cigar. He was seldom out long before one or another of his numerous chance acquaintances joined him; but it was somewhat of a surprise to him when Pelham slipped his hand under his arm and volunteered to accompany him in his walk. The attention pleased Mr. Daly a good deal, and even flattered him. Pelham was habitually so reserved, that any advance towards intimacy from him was apt to be received as a mark of favour, especially by his father, who often wearied himself in vain attempts to win the same open-hearted

confidence from his eldest son that the younger children gave him spontaneously. Mr. Daly took as much pains to be an agreeable companion that evening as ever courtier did while seeking to worm himself into the favour of a great man. He gave up his favourite lounge on the parade where he was sure of plenty of admiring companionship, and humoured his son's love of quiet by choosing the most solitary part of the beach for their walk. He talked confidentially of future plans; he told his very best stories of the stirring times of his youth; he chose subject after subject, sending anxious glances into his companion's face to discover what most roused and interested him; but these affectionate wiles were quite thrown away upon Pelham. It was not the custom at Pelham Court for members of one family to spend themselves greatly in conversation with each other. It was thought a mere waste of energy there, to be amusing and agreeable to people whom you were in the habit of seeing every day. To find his father so witty and entertaining only puzzled Pelham, and caused him to shrink further and further into his shell, feeling himself aggrieved as one unjustly accused of being "company."

"Can the lad have any folly on his conscience that he wants to confide in me?" Mr. Daly thought when, in spite of all his efforts, the conversation came to a standstill.

"Connor makes his confessions within the first half hour of his coming home, but it may be the way of this one to keep it all in till the last evening. What can I say to help him? but stay, it is coming."

"Father," Pelham began, hesitatingly, "I have been thinking——"

"That's right, my boy; tell me everything that troubles you—don't let there be any secrets between us. That's all I ask of either Connor or you. You will always find me your best friend if you are only open with me."

"Open with you! Secrets!" cried Pelham, startled and affronted. "I don't know what you mean. I have no secrets."

"Ah well, finish what you were going to say, however."

"I was only going to say that as I am not absolutely obliged to get back to Oxford for another month, I thought it might be as well for me to travel back to Ireland with you, and spend a fortnight or so at Castle Daly."

Mr. Daly's face brightened, and he gave the hand that rested on his arm an affectionate squeeze against his side.

"Thank you, Pelham. I understand your motive well. It's for your mother's sake you think of this; and you are right—it will make the trial of going back there easier to her if she has you with her, for she clings to you beyond us all. I know it's a sacrifice on your part, and I thank

you for making it. Even if the loss of time should make a difference in your degree, you'll not regret what you did for her sake."

Why could he not look a little pleasant in response to these cordial thanks? Mr. Daly wondered. What could his absolute silence and the deep flush that overspread his face signify? It was a little hard to have all his efforts at cordiality so persistently thrust aside.

Pelham was longing to speak. He had never felt so ashamed of himself, so like an impostor in his life, as he did while his father thanked him and pressed his arm. He who indulged habitually in such scorn of Connor's and Ellen's little flatteries and polite insincerities, he to be afraid of explaining the true motive of his conduct, and silently accept undeserved praise! It was that appeal to his confidence that had kept him silent. With a person who could not receive a simple remark without imagining it the beginning of a confession, how could he attempt to explain the very peculiar circumstances that caused him to feel the duty of protecting Lesbia Maynard from Connor's impertinences more important than any other consideration? Pelham put this question to himself, and pondered silently during the rest of the walk home on the annoyance of being made to feel like a hypocrite: and through all the years of his after life he was never able to

hear the swish of waves falling on a stony shore without being brought back by memory to those silent minutes, and wondering what there was in the world he would not now give to regain the power, neglected then, of breaking the monotonous sound by a word spoken cordially to an ear that waited for it.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh fair her face of light
Past the tongue's telling,
Woe was me
E'en to see
Beauty so shining;
Ever since, hourly
Have I been pining."

S. FERGUSON.

"IF one must worry, it is at least an advantage to have a change of anxieties; and the uncertainties of the post here do me the service of keeping me in a state of expectation about something else than your return home," Bride Thornley remarked to her brother as she met him at the garden gate, one late September day about a week after Anne O'Flaherty's visit. "Here's another day gone, and still no letters from Lesbia or the Maynards. What can it mean?"

"It means that Mike Casey has overturned the post-car as he was racing down the hill into Ballyowen, and has broken two of his own ribs and the car's back, all of which

will take some mending to restore them even to their original crazy condition."

"I hope it was not till after he had posted our letters to Lesbia."

"That's all you think of, you strong-minded woman. It was three days ago."

"Well, I really can't feel very compassionate over Mike Casey and the car—the catastrophe has been due so long. By the way he drives he ought to break his ribs every day; and I have always been wondering why he did not. But, having heard this, had you the sense to drive round by Ballyowen and inquire for letters?"

"I had the sense."

"Well?"

"Well, Father Peter is holding a station at Saint Patrick's well; the man at the shop where the post-office is has gone to his duty; and the woman and boy can neither speak English nor read writing Popular people go in and turn the letters over for themselves, and take what they like; but I am not to be trusted. I think I could have come over the old woman with half-a-crown to let me have my turn at the rummage, if Peter Lynch, who was sitting inside the office calmly picking his mistress' letters from a heap, had not said something in Irish that strengthened her virtue to resist temptation."

"You had to go away empty-handed?"

"Yes, and with a conviction amounting to certainty that a packet of letters, which I espied on a shelf, stuck between a treacle jar and a bundle of candles, had our names upon them. I could not collar Peter Lynch, jump over the counter and seize them, could I?"

"I don't mind waiting, if the letters are there. I was beginning to fear the child might be ill, or something wrong with her. John, I don't think I shall be easy now till we have her with us."

"If you were not Bride I should ask why the company of a sister who is a great heiress is more desirable than that of one who has nothing?"

"And if you were not John I should hate you for having such a detestable thought. You ought to have admired my perfect reasonableness in having kept down my longing for the child when I could not have her company. Let us take another turn on the terrace while we discuss plans for bringing her here. I can allow that this place is beautiful, now I see a fair prospect of getting away from it."

"I shall not go till I have brought affairs here into proper training, and can resign with credit to myself. Please to attach some importance to my career; don't efface me all at once into Miss Lesbia Maynard's guardian."

"Trust me for standing up for your dignity and your

career when I once have you safe out of the nest of enemies. I wish I could cure myself of always feeling here as if every word we said to each other was overheard and liable to be twisted to your injury. I wonder where that red-cloaked old woman whose head I see bobbing up behind the wall sprang from? I did not see her when we turned last."

"I saw her hobbling down the road half-an-hour ago. I suspect she is one of your beggars—whom, contrary to all principle, you weakly allow to haunt the house still."

"As far as that one is concerned I can't help myself, for I can't get rid of her. I see who it is now—old Molly Malachy, the plague of my life. One day when I was gardening by this gate, and she had just left the house with a basketful of broken meat, Miss O'Flaherty passed, and I overheard a conversation between the two. Miss O'Flaherty reproached her with her meanness in begging from *us*, and she excused herself on the plea of fleecing the Egyptians."

"I think that was rather good. Go and see what she wants and send her off."

"Send her off yourself, if you think it's so easy. I wonder what is the least sum she will consent to take from you before she stirs from the gate."

"You imagine that I shall be weak enough to give her anything?"

"We shall see."

John walked down to the garden gate, and Bride strolled on towards Mrs. Daly's flower-borders, the only part of the pleasure-grounds still kept in tolerable order, and chiefly by her hands. The light of the clear September day was dying in the west. The sharp outlines of the grey Maam-Turk hills began to melt into the purpling sky, the trees in the plantation behind the house to group themselves into masses of shadow; the opal colours of sunset had faded from the lake, leaving it a pale sheet of shimmering silver, with fantastic mist-wreaths brooding and gathering on its further shore. A scent of falling leaves and strong-smelling autumn flowers filled the still heavy air. Bride snuffed it up with a sense of satisfaction. Autumnal scenes and evening hours had a special attraction for her. She never found them sad, as other people professed to do; they soothed and even exhilarated her spirits, speaking to her heart in tones she understood with the voices of friends. She had walked through shadows and frosts too long not to be on handshaking terms with them; and it was easier to her to find pleasure in the promise of the future, the hidden hope, the little hints of the new day and the distant summer that evening and autumn whisper of, than in the full

beauty of sunshine and flowers that seemed to mock the pale tints in which her own life's history was painted. She paused to gather a handful of autumn violets, and to listen to the deep stillness of the evening. Now and then a strong tone of John's voice reached her, or a shrill whining exclamation from Molly Malachy. She looked back, and smiled to see that they were talking still, John actually leaning over the gate in an attitude of listening—and—yes—there was a withered, skinny, brown hand on his arm. Well Bride knew he was not the man to shake it off.

What a triumph over him she would have! Yet she wished the colloquy over, for she was losing the opportunity of talking to him on the subject next to her heart. She turned her face again towards the white road, that winding up and down hill into the far distance looked so promising, as if it must some day or other bring something new even into her life. Mechanically her eyes rested on a black spot, appearing just on the verge of sight—Peter Lynch, no doubt, in the three-wheeled car, returning to Ballyowen with his mistress' letters. She traced it into a distinct shape, till a vague feeling of interest and expectation crept over her. A click of the gate and John's footsteps close behind roused her, and she turned quickly.

"Come, now, confess. How much? five shillings? Not less than half-a-crown, I'm very certain."

"Not a halfpenny."

"John, you're putting me off with some disgraceful subterfuge. Why, I saw her hand on your arm, and she is turning even now for another curtsey and 'God save you!' I'm afraid it is something serious. Have you promised her the reversion of my entire wardrobe? or is she to have one of the new slated cottages on the Ballyowen road? What have you given away?"

"Nothing, I protest again: or, to be very exact, about three hours of my own time. I should not like it to get talked about; but I did not see my way to refuse."

"Explain, please."

"It seems that a certain ruffian, commonly called 'Hill Dennis,' is that old crone's son."

"I know that well enough; you turned him out of his holding."

"For very good reasons. He was a thoroughly lawless fellow, a hatcher of mischief. I felt I should never make any way till he was got rid of."

"And for an old woman's tears you have consented to take him back; now I should have got rid of her with sixpence, and you would have sneered at me."

"I tell you I have not consented to anything but to see the man. He has come back to his mother's cabin in an abject state, half-starved and very miserable by her account;

and he is willing to give me some information respecting outrages he was concerned in before he went away, that may be very important and useful."

"To turn informer, as they say here. John, I would not have anything to do with him."

"I don't half like it, but living as I do in a network of plots, I must not neglect any chance that offers of learning to distinguish friend from foe, and knowing what to be at. This struggling in the dark with skulking enemies grows too discouraging."

"And is this Dennis to come here?"

"What an innocent question! How much do you suppose the fellow's life would be worth, if it were known he was in communication with me? I have promised to meet him in his old cabin, on the edge of the bog below Lac-y-Core. The place is quite deserted, and gone to ruin. The cabin had to be unroofed a year ago, and no one has ever ventured to live in it, since he was turned out."

"I shall go with you."

"To protect your brother against a skulking, half-starved vagabond; a fine opinion you have of his pluck, madam."

"How do you know that he may not bring half-a-dozen others with him?"

"To tell you the truth, it will not be the first interview. I have seen the fellow before, and he has committed him-

self too far already, to dare to put himself into communication with any of his former comrades. If you had seen him when he stopped me on the road one night last week, and tried to make me listen to him, shaking at every breath of wind, and terrified at his own shadow, you would have——"

"Pitied the wretch from the bottom of my heart."

"Ay, and the country that produces the breed; secret conspirators of dark crimes who can't even be true to each other."

The ring of scorn in the voice touched Bride a little painfully; she drew a deep breath.

"Thank God, we need not stay much longer in it. I doubt whether it is doing either of us good to be here. It hardens one's heart to live among people one does not like."

They had walked to the end of the terrace furthest from the road, and now turned again.

The moving speck Bride had been watching was full in sight by this time, and had resolved itself into an outside car, piled high with luggage, and containing three persons.

"Visitors to Miss O'Flaherty, no doubt," observed Bride; "two ladies and a gentleman; country-people of her own, I should say, and young, to judge by the wild way in which they are letting themselves be raced down the hill. See, they are actually standing up on the seat to get a view of

the house. They'll be over into the lake in a minute. What an Irish turn-out, to be sure."

The car was now passing the little irregular street of cabins that skirted the lake side, close to the Castle. A man leaning against his doorpost caught sight of its occupants, and throwing up his arms with a wild cry, seized the back of the carriage and allowed himself to be dragged on with it, shouting and screaming as he went. In an instant the village street was thronged, and the progress of the car effectually arrested by a little crowd of men, women, and children, who threw themselves in the way. A dozen hands seized the horses' heads, while gaunt forms pressed round, clutching wildly at the wheels and body of the vehicle, and thrusting excited faces into close proximity with those of the travellers on the car.

The sound of voices raised high—whether in joy or sorrow it was impossible to say—made a sudden break in the stillness of the evening.

"I must inquire what is going on down there," John exclaimed, when they had looked on for a minute and saw no abatement in the excitement. Bride followed at a little distance, thankful that the sound of tumult had not reached them after they had entered the house, when she would certainly have been ordered to sit still and wait in suspense till all was over.

She had reached the outskirts of the crowd before she could learn anything. Then she perceived that the centre of attraction towards which all the gesticulating hands were outstretched, all the eager faces turned, was the tall, slim figure of a girl who was standing up in the car, and holding down her hands, which at least a dozen old crones had seized to cover them with kisses. Her back was turned towards Bride, who could only fairly see the sloping shoulders towering above the crowd, and a bonnetless head incircled with masses of yellow hair, which made it show as if a faint light played round it.

A vague recollection rose in Bride's mind of an allegorical picture she had once seen, where an aureoled figure of Peace, or Plenty, or Love—she could not remember which —stood on a triumphal car, and showered down blessings on a world that had been perishing in her absence.

Was it a bit of grammerie that had come over with those mist-wreaths from the lake? or what had brought such an old-world scene from a Queen Elizabeth's progress into dirty, tumble-down Daly's Corner, as the village called itself?

There was a movement in the crowd, evidently following some request made by the goddess on the car; the people pressed together, leaving a clear path for some one who was being carefully lifted down; then a figure emerged from

the throng—a girlish figure—at the sight of which Bride's heart gave one great bound. A second more and soft arms were round her neck, and a voice that was like an echo from a far-off time was murmuring in her ear—

"Bride, Bride! I am Lesbia. I am your own little sister Babette come home to you. Do say you know me. I knew you and John the instant I saw you coming from the house, and I could not wait to get at you an instant longer."

The confusion was over for Bride after that moment of intense joy: it all resolved itself into Lesbia's happy home-coming, and she had little attention to give to anything else that went on round her. John made his way up to the car, and a few minutes later walked back to the Castle, accompanied by a young lady and gentleman, who introduced themselves to Bride—for Lesbia turned shy after her first impulsive greeting—as Ellen and Connor Daly.

A few words of explanation made all clear. Mr. and Mrs. Daly had hoped to find a carriage from the Castle waiting at Ballyowen to convey them home, but finding that they were not expected they had determined to stay the night at the hotel in the town, while Connor, Ellen, and Lesbia proceeded in the only conveyance that could be procured to carry the news of their return to the house,

and order preparations to be made for their arrival the next morning.

All was confusion and bustle in and about the place for the rest of the evening; but Bride was not in a mood to find fault. Holding Lesbia's hand in hers, and refreshing herself every now and then with a look into her face, she could enjoy the odd little traits of character that the excitement brought out with a lighter heart than she had known for many a day.

She listened with less contempt than might have been expected to an eloquent harangue delivered by Connor from the doorstep to the crowd that followed him to the house; and hardly noticed the impatient shrugs of the shoulders with which John heard his wild promises of help and protection to every one in the better times which, in spite of the scarcity, he asserted were sure to come back now his father was returned to live among them.

The shouts of welcome, the fervent "God save you's," the sight of all those haggard, hungry faces transfigured with joy and hope, touched her heart, in which a new joy and hope for her own life had sprung up. She did not like to believe just then that the millennium of good-will and good fortune which the young orator's lips pictured so glibly had no reality to rest upon, and was nothing but words. She did not even permit herself to feel provoked by Ellen's

surprise when she was told that the resources of the Castle Daly larder were at present insufficient to supplement Connor's airy promises by affording a substantial meal to all the vociferous applauders of his oratory; and she hardly showed any incredulity or annoyance at the assertions reiterated by all the bystanders that "there always used to be plenty—the bit and the sup were never wanting in the old times on similar occasions, and were never missed by those who had the heart to give them."

Her temper had a further trial when the increasing darkness drove them all into the house. Bride was by habit and instinct an exact, careful house-manager, and during the three years she had lived at Castle Daly she had grown to have a certain sense of proprietorship in the place. To find herself suddenly deposed was a little trying, and there was, for a careful house-mistress, considerable mortification in witnessing the joyful alacrity with which the servants she had trained flew in the face of all her instructions at the very first opportunity, in favour of old habits.

"Shure and won't I lay the table for supper this evening as Mr. Connor likes to see it—wid plenty in all the dishes haped up, and the praties in their jackets, and the big punch-bowl in the middle, wid lashings of whisky, and things handy, as they should be."

"Hurry and do it, thin, Katey avoorneeen; there's no one to hinder you now. Meself's flying up stairs to snatch off the dabs of white dimity covers and the bits of chintz hangings and curtains that she put up for nateness and cleanliness, she said, and that hide away the ould crimson and yellow and blue furniture that may be a trifle frayed and dirty, but that'll have the rale kindly home look to Miss Eileen's eyes."

Ellen herself was too full of the pleasure of being at home again, and too eager to revisit favourite haunts and hunt out old treasures, to perceive that her raptures might give offence. She and Connor hurried from room to room lamenting over changes and recognizing old ink-stains on carpets and deplorable bumps and dints in walls and furniture with inexplicable outcries of delight and laughter; while Lesbia vacillated between clinging to Bride and listening in absorbed interest to Connor's stories of the childish exploits to which these dilapidations were due.

The most comfortable part of the evening for Bride was after the travellers had retired to their rooms, when she went back into the library and found her brother pacing up and down between the windows with an excited expression on his face that told of not being ready for rest for a long time yet. She slipped her hand under his arm and paced with him. It was a habit of theirs which,

since the two had shared responsibilities together, almost invariably ended every anxious or unusually pleasurable day.

"She is a great deal prettier than we expected, is she not, John?" Bride began, after a meditative turn or two.

"I don't know that I expected anything. I had not thought of it; but she is certainly very beautiful: 'A daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair.'"

"My dear John!—*tall*!—fair! Why, she is shorter than I am, and has one of those clear brown skins with rich glows underneath that I think so much more beautiful than mere pink and white."

"Ah, yes, Lesbia has; but when you began to talk of some one being very pretty, I naturally thought you meant the other young lady."

"You think Miss Daly prettier than our Lesbia?"

"I can't help having eyes."

"But, John, she is a lady certainly—one recognizes that through all the over-eagerness and want of calm of manner: but how she did talk and laugh and race about this evening, and how untidily her hair kept falling over her shoulders. I must say I prefer more dignity and reticence in a young lady, don't you?"

"That depends. There's nothing in her to be reticent about. Pure, transparent unconsciousness is hedged round with something quite beyond dignity."

"You are getting quite beyond me. I don't understand you in the least. I must say I thought little Lesbia's sweet, shy manner and gentle little ways a thousand times more bewitching."

"Bewitching; yes. That's the right word for Lesbia. I am ready to allow that she is the most dangerous little lady of the two, if that is what you want me to say. I suppose it is the *little* ways that bewitch. That other manner has too much clear sunshine about it for the working of spells. It makes one feel small, somehow. One's own ridiculous, self-conscious dignity looks a wretched pedestal to be perched upon in the face of such gracious frankness; and yet one is too awkward to get down."

"You seem to have seen a great deal more than I did; I was quite taken up with Babette."

"And you are disgusted with me for not being equally absorbed?"

"Babette's coming home is the great event of the day to us, you must allow. The Dalys are nothing to us, or will be nothing soon."

"Nothing whatever, so we can afford to form candid opinions about them."

"And your opinion really is that Miss Daly is handsomer than Lesbia?"

"Incomparably handsomer. I won't be bullied out of my sober judgment a jot; but what then? Lac-y-Core is a great deal better to look at than the sloping field before our old house at Abbot's Thornley: but I had far rather live in sight of the field than of the mountain for the rest of my life."

"Allow at least before I leave you that Miss Daly's hair was very untidy, and that you would not like to see Lesbia's in the same condition."

"No: I won't yield to feminine pertinacity so far as to allow that. All I saw was that something which I fancied at first was a Will-o'-the-wisp light playing round her head had melted suddenly to streaks of sunbeams."

"If you have taken to metaphors I give you up from to-night. You are a lost man."

CHAPTER XVII.

> "Quid sit futurum cras fuge quærere, et
> Quem sors dierum cunque dabit, lucro
> Appone."
>
> HORACE.

IT was the afternoon of the second day after the arrival, and there was at last a little lull in and about the house. Anne O'Flaherty, with Peter Lynch and Murdoch Malachy in her train, had come and gone. The crowd of men with ragged frieze coats tied by the sleeves round their shoulders and thorn-sticks in their hands, that had besieged the door since early morning, had thinned now to two or three still patiently waiting for their turn for a private word "wid his honour." The women who had hung about the gate or squatted by the roadside all day for the chance of a glimpse of Miss Eileen, were dispersing to their mountain cabins, to blow up the peat fire, and put on the big potato-pot, with its this year's scanty portion of bad potatoes, against their husbands came in to supper. John

Thornley was sitting at his desk in his own room looking at a pile of finished letters, and listening till the cessation of voices in the library below should show him that the opportunity he was expecting had arrived for finding Mr. Daly alone and making a communication to him that he too had in store. As he leaned back in his chair, with his eyes fixed absently on the opposite wall, his lips moved as if framing words; and gleams of expression, earnest, satisfied, amused, crossed his face from time to time. An observer would have divined that he was going over the expected interview in imagination, and laying out sentences and arguments that would not be spoken without satisfaction to himself. If Mr. Daly, taking the management of his affairs back into his own hands, chose to resume the old, ruinous, haphazard courses, it should at least not be for want of plain showing of their folly and iniquity from John Thornley. From the room next his, Bride was issuing, bonneted and shawled, with the purpose of taking a turn up and down the flower-borders with Mrs. Daly. She, too, had some words of interest to insinuate between the remarks about the autumn flowers that would begin the conversation, but there was no need for her to think her sentences out beforehand. It would be difficult enough without that to keep them from tripping off her tongue before the seasonable moment arrived. Good fortune

like ill, seldom comes in single file, but in whole battalions; and that morning had brought a letter to John that had given Bride far deeper pleasure than the news of Lesbia's fortune. It was from a noted literary man for whom John had for years occasionally worked, offering him the editorship of an important literary journal, on such terms as would fully justify him in abandoning other occupations to follow the line to which his inclination pointed, and in which his sister's ambition saw a bright career opening before him.

"It is safe to give a shove upwards to a man who is no longer needy," John had said, as he handed the letter to his sister, carefully guarding face and voice from any touch of triumph. But the sneer did not deceive Bride; she could divine easily enough the thrill of mingled pride and gratitude it was meant to cover.

As she emerged by Mrs. Daly's side into the clear September sunshine, it crossed her mind that she should not have believed, if any one had prophesied it to her, that anything so triumphant as this task of conveying to Mrs. Daly, in an unconcerned tone, the necessity that had arisen for John's resignation of the agency, coupled with a passing allusion to Lesbia's heiress-ship, would ever have occurred in her life.

Meantime Lesbia, who had spent the greater part of the

day shut up with her brother and sister, and who was, to tell the truth, a little wearied and overawed by the amount of good sense and the reasonable plans she had had to listen to, ran lightly up stairs to seek for gayer companions in the old schoolroom, of which Connor and Ellen had made her free on the first evening of her arrival. Her face fell a little when she opened the door and found it almost empty, no one appearing but Ellen, who was seated on the floor in the window recess, with her hands clasped round her knees, looking dreamily out towards the mountains. She turned her head as the door opened, and burst out laughing at Lesbia's little start of dismay.

"Yes, they have gone out; you are late," she said. "They hung about disgusted at your non-appearance till they had worked themselves up to such a pitch of crossness that I was obliged to hunt them away."

"They?"

"The boys, of course. Men are always 'they,' you know, and we women only 'you and I.'"

"How comfortable," cried Lesbia, recovering herself. "I have so much to say to you; it will be quite a treat for you and me to have an hour's talk alone."

"Do you think so?" said Ellen, absently turning her face to the window again.

"Oh, if you don't want me I can go away."

Ellen answered by taking Lesbia's hands and drawing her down to a seat on a dilapidated child's straw chair that occupied a corner of the window recess.

"There, you are enthroned," she cried. "I don't know why, but when we were children, Connor and I used to consider that crazy straw chair the most desirable seat in the whole house. We had a fiction that it imparted magical powers of some sort; and how we used to quarrel for the possession of it! Connor calls it the tripod—it has only three legs left, you see—and grows dangerously inspired when he sits on it still Try what it will do for you."

"But if you had rather be alone——if you don't want me——"

"I want you, but I am not in a talking mood. Connor and I are boa-constrictors about talk; we take great meals of talking, and then we are silent for a long while. I was in the talking stage of joy last night; now I have come to the feeling time. I just want to sit here and watch that lilac shadow eat up the patch of sunshine on the hill beyond the lake, and feel how happy I am. If I talk, I shall lose some of the sights out there."

"Well, I can be silent too. I am sure I have plenty to think about, and much more important things than how a shadow is moving."

Lesbia did not find the tripod a seat favourable to serious

meditation, as it required nice skill in balancing to keep it upright. Her eye soon left the landscape outside to stray round the room, and take an astonished inventory of the furniture. She had been used to look up to the Dalys as rather grand people, and to listen to Connor's descriptions of Castle Daly with profound respect; but really the old little garret-room at Whitecliffe that she had shared with Bobbie and Wattie and despised so, was in many respects a better place than this favourite room of Ellen Daly's. There were here and there a few signs of past grandeur, to be sure. That old arm-chair on which her eyes rested, with torn strips of faded blue velvet hanging from the seat, and remnants of gilding on its dented framework, might have figured in some stately drawing-room a hundred years or so ago. Lesbia thrust her hand down into her pocket to feel for her thimble and housewife with a notable instinct to set about sewing up the rents; the velvet need not hang in strips, however faded it was. Then a thought struck her, and she drew her hand out again. It would be as easy to her now to buy new furniture as to mend the old—nay, easier. John had been talking to her that morning, explaining her new position, and the subtle sense of possession had stolen into her mind. It was very pleasant, this new idea of power and consequence that had dawned on her. She fairly turned her back on the

landscape now, and shaded her eyes with her hand, intent on pictures of another kind that rose up. What a change a little of her money—say one thousand out of her hundred thousands—would make in this house! She began to see the place under a new aspect, not exactly settling in her thoughts who were to be the inhabitants of the renovated, stately rooms, but always seeing herself moving about with dignity among a throng of guests, and Ellen Daly looking on from a certain distance, and feeling a kind of astonishment at the change. Other figures glided in and out among the throng, but she would not quite look at them or decide why they were there. She was just conscious of some other presence besides the gay furniture that lent a halo to the scene, but it was something undefined, a long way off from any possibility of being put into words. The minutes slipped on unheeded by the two dreamers in such separate worlds. Ellen was the first to break silence.

"There, it has gone. I have seen the sun set behind Lac-y-Core again. I saw him climb up out of the lake this morning, so I ought to be satisfied; but have I made the most of the day?"

"Bride says that you have been racing about like a mad creature ever since it was light," said Lesbia, a little maliciously.

"With all that, I have not seen all the shapes that Lac-y-Core has taken since sunrise against the sky; and there have been dozens of changes of colour on the side of the ravine that I have not caught, and that may never come again, for no two days are alike here."

"I don't understand caring so very much for things outside the house," said Lesbia. "I am not sure that it is quite right; at least, I know Aunt Maynard thinks it silly."

"My dear Lesbia!"

"Yes, you are surprised to hear me quoting her. I am surprised myself, for I don't forget how tiresome I used to think her sayings a week ago. However, things and people look different when one has left them behind, and when one's own circumstances are changed. Ellen, just look down into the flower-garden. Your mother and Bride are still pacing up and down the broad walk, and Bride is telling your mother about me."

"About you?"

"Why, Ellen, you surely have not forgotten already what I told you at Whitecliffe about my fortune!"

"I am afraid I have been very unsympathizing, but you told me not to speak of it again, and I waited to hear how it was to be—what your brother and sister agreed to do about it."

"About dividing it, do you mean? Ellen, if you knew

more of John and Bride you would feel how difficult it would be for me to propose such a plan to them. They don't care for money, but they don't look upon a great fortune as if it were something one could settle what to do with all in a minute. If I had spoken of giving it up to John he would have called me unpractical, and I should have felt I was annoying him."

"Your own brother?"

"But I have not lived with my brother since I was a child; and he is so much older than I am."

"You may well say so much older. He strikes me as wonderfully old, that brother of yours, Babette."

"Indeed, no; I beg your pardon: he is under thirty."

"What does it matter what people call themselves? That's a stupid way of reckoning age, when some people can crowd years and years of living into a day or two. That is what has happened to your brother and sister."

"How do you know?"

"By looking."

"I am afraid you don't like them, then; and yet I thought you seemed very much pleased when John mentioned his having stood at the top of a hill looking down into Miss O'Flaherty's valley so long one day that he quite forgot the business that had brought him there."

"I was very much surprised, just as one is when one

picks up a bit of a dead branch, and finds that there are buds upon it; and that it is not so dead as it looks."

"John is not a bit graver or older-looking than a man of his age ought to be."

"Well, he is an Englishman, and why should not he be old and grave if he likes? I'll not hinder him of his pleasure in it, you may be sure. There! he and papa have come out of the house together, their business talk over at last, I hope. Oh, what a mighty stretch and yawn! Papa has thrown off every grain of trouble and care with that, and means to enjoy the evening; but look, your brother puts his hand on his arm and begins talking again; he is urging papa to do something or other he does not wish to do, and if there were twenty silver moons beginning to show in the sky instead of that one, he would go on at it all the same without even seeing them. I shall run down to the rescue. I won't have papa defrauded of his evening walk for any Englishman's pertinacity."

Ellen found it an easier task than she had expected to carry her point. She had many a time done battle with Mr. O'Roone for her father's company, and looked for a sufficiently long opposition to give her a pleasant sense of victory.

Mr. Thornley was a different sort of antagonist, however, from those she had been used to engage, and apparently did not think it worth while to waste words on her. He

moved aside to let her take her father's arm when she came out on the terrace; but answered her merry appeal to him to give up this particular hour of her father's time with a silent bow only. Ellen, glancing up into his face in wonder at such a remarkable talent for silence, saw an expression of vexation and worry there that surprised her. How odd it was that this stranger should be so much more interested in her father's affairs than he was himself. She knew it must be some concerns of her father's that brought the look of care on his face, for she had learned from Lesbia what cause he had that day to be happy about his own good fortune. Well, if people could be miserable among mountains and lakes on a clear autumn evening, with the hunter's moon at full beginning to show in the sky, let them; only they must not be allowed to spoil the happiness of those for whom such things were joy enough. The most vexatious affairs will keep till daylight.

"Mr. Thornley," she said, gaily, "you shall not grudge my father and me this one hour together on our first day at home."

No direct answer. Mr. Thornley's eyes were fixed on Mr. Daly's face. "You must excuse me one moment longer," he said. "I am very much in earnest in this matter. I particularly wish to keep my appointment with this Dennis Malachy myself, and alone. It may be all a

trick, as you say; but my own impression is different. I think something of importance will come out, and I should prefer to keep the appointment myself."

"Be easy, be easy; I have taken it on myself, and I should prefer that just for this once you should trust to my understanding of the people I have known since they were boys being sounder than your own." Then, as Mr. Thornley hesitated and seemed about to speak again, Mr. Daly added, with one of the keen looks of authority that came now and then into his gay blue eyes, "The omission to keep your appointment with Dennis Malachy need scarcely trouble you, since you are leaving us all so soon."

It was almost equivalent to reminding him that his authority and interest in the affairs of the place were over, and that further persistence would be an interference. A slight colour rose in Mr. Thornley's cheeks, and Ellen was sorry for him. He was quicker to feel things, this wonderfully old-young man, than one would have supposed.

"You must let papa have his own way this once, Mr. Thornley, please," she said, kindly. "He is in my charge now. I shall make him tell me what he is going to do, and if it is anything wrong I'll scold him. I can do it a great deal better than you; now can I not, papa?"

It was impossible for gravity itself not to relax under the influence of Ellen's bright cordiality. John Thornley

walked down to the gate with them, chatting pleasantly, and then turned back towards the house. Ellen gave a bound of joy when he was gone, and clasped her hands tight round her father's arm.

"Now I have you all to myself, here at last. Oh what joy! Does not everything look natural, as if we had never been away? Look, papa! there's Billy Tully's boat with the hole in the bottom in its old place under the hollow rock, where it was put to be mended years ago; and the coping stones that fell from the garden wall in the great storm are in their old places on the ground, only a little more moss-covered: and though that tree has grown higher, I can still catch a glimpse through it of the red gable of Matthew Burke's farmhouse's roof, that he began to cover with tiles and never finished. I feel as if I should like to run about to all the things and kiss them for having stood still in their places and not altered a shade since we left them. Is there any one in the world I wonder happier than I am this minute?"

"You love it all, then, you true Irishwoman—ruin and all? 'Let alone' is good enough for you, Eileen Bawn, eh?"

"Yes, if it makes people happy; and how happy they are to see you among them again!"

"They don't go in for improvements."

"Mr. Thornley has been making improvements—the wretch!"

"He has been trying hard, and flatters himself that by dint of pushing and pulling and dragging he has put a little motion into the old machine—given it a start along the road of progress; but now you see King Log has come back again the frogs will have a little peace, and escape crushing at all events."

"We did very well as we were, I think. I suppose we might be richer, and the cabins and farms, and the Castle too for that matter, might be in better order, and the people cleaner and more industrious and better off; but then, if we were, how discontented and miserable we should all be."

"I wish John Thornley were here to hear you, and sneer at your Irish logic—discontented and miserable because we were better off!"

"Papa, I meant it—it was not a bull; it is what I have observed. Once begin to worry about things going well and being in good order, and there is no end."

"True as the O'Flaherty witch herself could put it, my yellow-haired queen. Whereas, you see, to old boats, and half-roofed farmhouses, and copeless walls, and King Logs in the water, there *is* an end. Bit by bit we rot and crumble away, till there is nothing left of us. Are you prepared to

face that position of things, you hater of improvements?"

"I don't truly mean that I hate anything but being kept away from you. Papa, I'll tell you a secret. It *is* great joy to get back to this place. You know what every stone of it is to one's heart, but it's the seeing you back here that I really care for. I never felt I had *you* all the time we were in England. I don't think it was *you* that lived in the doleful little house with us there; but now, by our own lake-side, I have you fast, and you won't shut your heart against me any more, or let there be any little corner full of troubles in your mind that I may not creep into to smooth them and fold them away, so that you will hardly know they are there. You always promised that when I grew up we would enter into partnership, and now that you are well rid of Mr. Thornley I mean to take his place."

"So you shall, my darling, and we'll make the best of it as things stand; but if I were well out of the way, remember there's no one would be such a good friend or adviser for Pelham as this young Thornley. I am glad he has been here and learned so much; his help and advice might be useful again to Pelham when the time comes that he has to manage for himself and I am well out of the way."

"Papa, do you hear me? You are not to talk of being well out of the way when I am telling you that the only thing I care for on earth is to see you in it. Don't you think you and I together will be worth more than Pelham and Mr. Thornley? If we asked all the people around to choose, would not they shout out for us?"

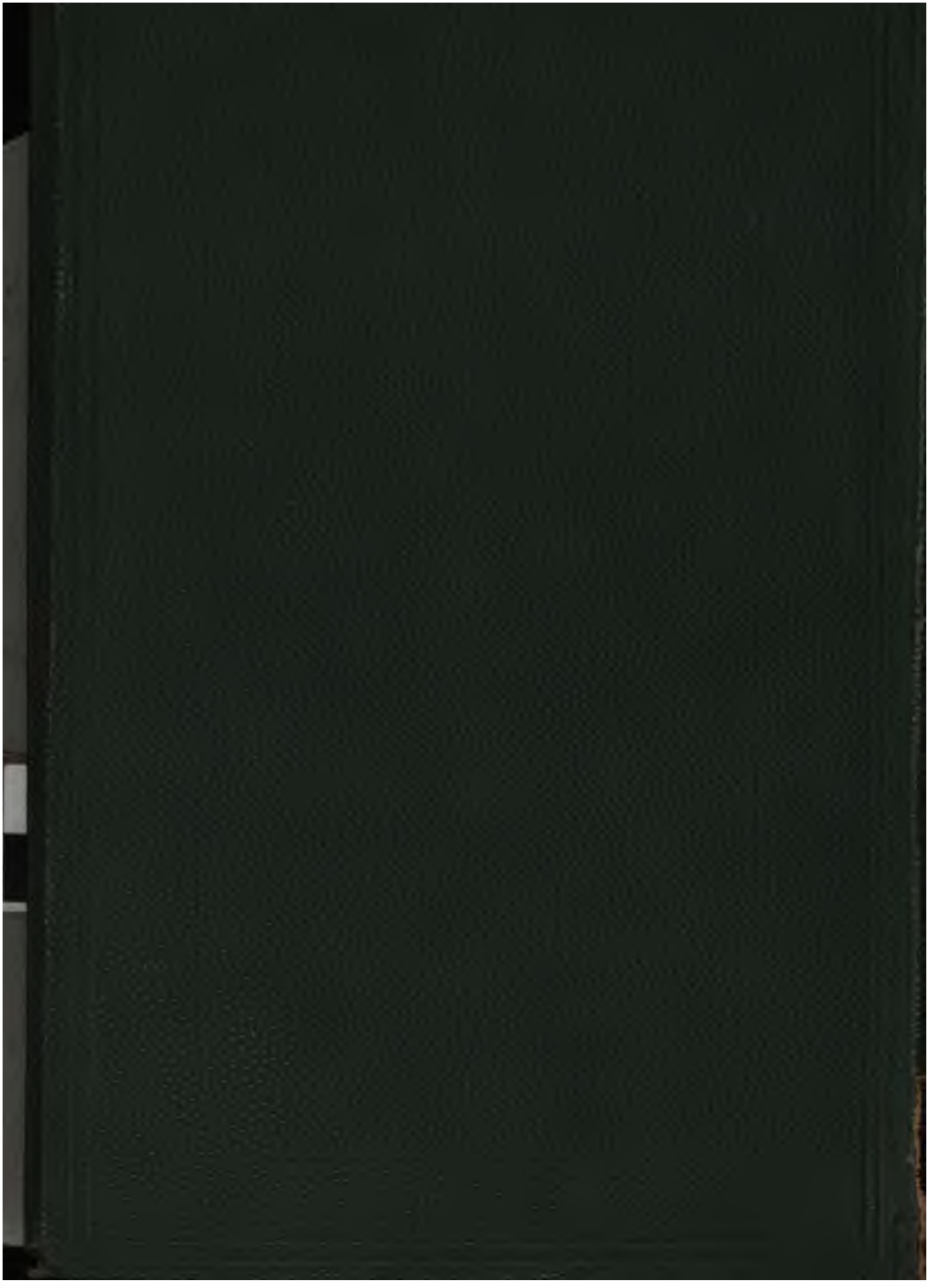
"For King and Queen Log!—not a doubt of it. But then you see there is the rotting process to come afterwards."

"We are not going to rot. We will have our little improvements, and our plans too. My first is that we shall go on living precisely as we did before, only that in every way we shall be a little happier and a little better, and that never, never again shall you say sad words, or talk of being out of the way, when you and I are walking together in the moonlight, and I have your dear arm fast between my two hands."

"At least I promise never again to say anything to vex you, Eileen aroon. Now we have come to the steep bit of the hill, and it is time for you to run back to the house Connor is bringing my horse after me. I had better mount here, for I have a longish ride before me."

"You have not told me yet where you are going."

"I shall not come back to dinner. When I have finished my business I shall ride on to the Hollow, and stay the night with Anne O'Flaherty."

"How I wish you would take me with you! Good-bye. We must have a walk by the lake every night while this moon is full."

Ellen turned at the gate to wave her hand towards the tall figure on horseback standing sentinel on the white road till she should have entered the house. "How handsome he looks on his own horse!" she said to herself. "Every one would know who it is, even in the moonlight, and there will be glad hearts in the cabins as he passes, and welcoming faces peeping out. I wish I could follow with my eyes, and see him all the way to the Hollow."